

# Forensic Anthropology Practitioner Levels



## FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGY - PRACTITIONER LEVELS

This document lays out the criteria for the various levels of Forensic Anthropologist as defined in the RAI and the Forensic Regulator's Code of Practice, Ethics and Professional Standards for Forensic Anthropology and should be read in conjunction with that document as well as the document outlining the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Forensic Anthropology and aligned professions.

Three levels of Forensic Anthropologist occur providing a means of natural career progression within the field, through a process of continuing professional and learning development within a structured mentoring environment. A route to direct entry to Forensic Anthropologist II and III is also possible.

For the purposes of this document aligned professions, such as Osteology and Craniofacial Anthropology, are subsumed under Forensic Anthropology.

It is assumed throughout this document that forensic casework presented for examination may be domestic or international, providing it meets the standards required for the UK accreditation scheme.

### FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGIST I (FA I)

A Forensic Anthropologist I is the entry level for professional practice and is aimed at appropriately qualified individuals who have begun to develop their skills within the discipline.

Entry into **Forensic Anthropologist I** is conferred by portfolio review. The portfolio should contain evidence of the following:

- An Honours degree (and preferably a Masters degree) in physical or biological anthropology, anatomy or forensic anthropology, with supporting transcripts providing evidence of osteology training.
- A minimum of two years relevant professional experience post graduation.
- Attendance at a minimum of two professionally relevant conferences which could include (but is not limited to) BAHID, BAFA, FASE, IAFS, AAFS, IAI or AAPA.
- Membership of the RAI.

**and** at least one of the following:

- Certificates of attendance for at least one CPD activity relevant to forensic anthropology.
- Evidence of enrolment in a taught postgraduate (Masters level) or research degree programme (PhD or Masters by research) in Forensic Anthropology.
- Obtained additional experience working with bone for example through volunteer work in museums or on archaeological sites working with human or animal remains.

Application for Forensic Anthropologist I must be supported by two letters of reference, at least one of which should be from a Forensic Anthropologist III and the second from an academic supervisor or employer. Both referees must be familiar with the candidate's work.

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## WORKING PRACTICE

A Forensic Anthropologist I should work under the supervision of a Forensic Anthropologist II or III. Their direct responsibilities would include:

- conducting triage deciding where skeletal elements are animal or human,
- collecting basic data within a laboratory/mortuary setting,
- taking measurements and keeping appropriate professional notes,
- assisting a Forensic Anthropologist II or III.

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## PROGRESSION

A Forensic Anthropologist I is expected to be involved in various activities, including a combination of the following:

- Engaging in continued learning.
- Developing knowledge through attendance at relevant CPD activities as outlined in the CPD guidance document.
- Developing an understanding of health and safety for both scene and laboratory/mortuary investigations.
- Developing an understanding of forensic anthropological practice in a professional and criminal justice setting.
- Work with and be supervised by Forensic Anthropologists II and/or III.
- Present papers/posters at professional meetings, conferences, symposia.
- Engage in research and publish in peer-reviewed journals.

## FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGIST II (FA II)

Entry into **Forensic Anthropologist II** is by written and practical examination. Application normally requires a minimum of two years experience after attaining Forensic Anthropologist I status including evidence of participation in the activities involved in that role including those outlined in the CPD guidance documentation.

Direct entry to the examination process is also possible where the candidate presents a portfolio of evidence commensurate with entry requirements.

To be eligible to sit the FAII examination, the applicant must demonstrate evidence of the following:

- A portfolio documenting participation in a minimum of 5 instances where animal vs human bone differentiation was undertaken.
- A demonstrable understanding of health and safety for both scene and laboratory/mortuary investigations.
- A demonstrable knowledge of osteology and/or anatomy, skeletal biology, population variation, statistics and human identification.
- Participation in relevant continuing education and training in forensic anthropology or related fields, for example, but not limited to, osteology, human identification, craniofacial anthropology, anatomy, biological anthropology, etc. through CPD or research activities including, if applicable, enrolment in a PhD degree programme.
- A minimum of two years relevant experience after attaining Forensic Anthropologist I status including evidence of participation in the activities involved in that role including those outlined in the CPD guidance document.
- Continued attendance at a minimum of two professionally relevant conferences which could include (but are not limited to) BAHID, BAFA, FASE, IAFS, AAFS, IAI or AAPA.
- Continued membership of at least one relevant professional body/association including the RAI.

Application for Forensic Anthropologist II must be supported by two letters of reference, at least one of which should be from a Forensic Anthropologist III and the second from a senior forensic scientist, Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) or Crime Scene Manager (CSM). Both referees must be familiar with the candidates work.

The examination for Forensic Anthropologist II shall consist of two parts:

- (1) a short answer test of 2 hours duration, which will encompass all UK criminal justice systems, its process and procedures particularly in relation to handling of evidence, chain of custody, duties and responsibilities of an expert (for example as described in part 33 of the Criminal Procedure evidence rules (2010), and as described in the Law Commission's proposed expert evidence bill,(2011), the Disclosure manual (2005) as well as relevant legal acts such as the Anatomy acts and Human Tissue Acts for the various jurisdictions in the UK), professional ethics and codes of practice and secondly the basic techniques required for the development of a biological profile;
- (2) a 2 hour practical exam to include; human versus animal bone identification, basic measurement of skeletal elements and basic techniques related to the assessment of sex, age, stature and ancestry.

The examination shall be available annually (as long as there are at least two individuals sitting the exam; or, if only a single person applies over the course of two years, then the exam will be provided in the second year) in conjunction with the BAFA meetings. Candidates who fail at examination can re-sit at the next available examination.

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## WORKING PRACTICE

A Forensic Anthropologist II should work under the direct supervision of a Forensic Anthropologist III. Their direct responsibilities would include:

- deciding whether skeletal elements are animal or human
- collecting and interpreting data in a laboratory/mortuary setting
- keeping appropriate professional notes and documentation
- assisting in forensic anthropology casework at both the scene and the laboratory/mortuary
- co-authoring case reports and potentially providing evidence as an expert witness for the courts of law
- engaging in mentoring activities for Forensic Anthropologist I

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## PROGRESSION

A Forensic Anthropologist II is expected to be involved in various activities, including a combination of the following:

- Engaging in continued learning
- Continued maintenance and development of competence including through attendance at relevant CPD activities as outlined in the CPD guidance document
- Work with and be supervised by Forensic Anthropologist III
- Provide supervision and mentoring to Forensic Anthropologist I
- Active and on-going engagement in casework under the instruction and guidance of Forensic Anthropologist III including engagement in peer review processes and potentially delivering evidence as an expert witness for the court
- Present papers/posters at professional meetings, conferences, symposia
- Engage in research and publish in peer-reviewed journals
- Be involved in the development and delivery of training and education (for example through activities in institutions or professional training)

## FORENSIC ANTHROPOLOGIST III (FA III)

A Forensic Anthropologist III must have completed at least an MSc, and preferably a PhD, in forensic anthropology or a related discipline (for example, anatomy, human osteology, physical or biological anthropology). Candidates must have undertaken further training in forensic anthropology and, have been an active participant in forensic anthropology casework compliant with the requirements of

professional practitioners within the UK criminal Justice system. Casework experience must have included work across a broad range of case types and complexity.

Entry into **Forensic Anthropologist III** is by case review and a cross examination based *viva voce* examination. Application normally requires a minimum of three years experience after attaining Forensic Anthropologist II status including evidence of participation in the activities involved in that role including those outlined in the CPD guidance documentation.

Direct entry is also possible where the candidate presents a portfolio of evidence commensurate with these requirements.

In addition the applicant must demonstrate evidence of the following:

- A case portfolio documenting a minimum of 5 co-authored/sole-authored peer-reviewed forensic cases. These cases must demonstrate a broad range of expertise, complexity and knowledge demonstrating the breadth of knowledge required at this level.
- Participation in relevant continuing education and training in forensic anthropology or related fields , for example, but not limited to, osteology, human identification, craniofacial anthropology, anatomy, biological anthropology) etc. through CPD or research activities including, if applicable, enrolment in a PhD degree programme.
- Evidence of delivery of evidence as an expert witness to the courts and/or completion of expert witness training.
- A demonstrable understanding of health and safety for both scene and laboratory/mortuary investigations.
- Continued attendance at a minimum of two professionally relevant conferences which could include (but is not limited to) BAHID, BAFA, FASE, IAFS, AAFS, IAI or AAPA.
- Continued membership of at least one relevant professional body/association including the RAI.

Application for Forensic Anthropologist III must be supported by two letters of reference, at least one of which should be from a mentor and the second from a relevant professional, including police, legal or academic. Both referees must be familiar with the candidate's work.

The examination for **Forensic Anthropologist III** shall consist of an **expert witness oral examination**. The candidate will supply 3 anonymised forensic case reports (from a range of types and complexity) and the oral examination will relate to these cases. The oral examination will consist of questions pertaining to any of a number of core areas including but not limited to: theoretical aspects of population variation and its application to forensic anthropology (e.g. the biological profile), expert witness testimony, forensic taphonomy, craniofacial analysis, the interpretation of trauma (distinguishing between ante-, peri- and post- mortem trauma), bone pathology, knowledge of burned and cremated remains, soft tissue/decomposed remains and juvenile remains.

The examination shall be available annually in conjunction with the BAFA meetings. Candidates who fail at examination can re-sit at the next available examination.

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## WORKING PRACTICE

A Forensic Anthropologist III is expected to be actively involved in number of different activities, including a combination of the following:

- Active and on-going engagement in casework either as a sole author or as part of a team including a full peer review process and delivery of evidence as an expert witness for the courts of law.
- Engaging in continued learning.
- Continued maintenance and development of competence including through attendance at relevant CPD activities as outlined in the CPD guidance document.
- Supervise and mentor Forensic Anthropologists I and II.
- Provide leadership in relevant professional organisations such as BAFA, BAHID, FASE, AAFS, IAFS or in other relevant national and international professional bodies and organisations (for example with the Forensic Science regulator, Interpol etc).
- Present papers/posters at professional meetings, conferences, symposia.
- Lead research and publish in peer-reviewed journals.
- Be involved in the development and delivery of training and education (for example through activities in higher education establishments or professional training).

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## MENTORING

BAFA defines “mentoring” as:

- a personal development relationship in which a more experienced and more knowledgeable person helps a less experienced and less knowledgeable person in their professional development and learning and is an essential and meaningful opportunity for growth as a professional practitioner in the field.

Mentoring is a collaborative process and must be distinguished from “peer review” (another equally essential, but separate part of one’s professional growth). Mentoring is a one-on-one relationship between a lesser experienced and a more experienced forensic anthropologist and should involve, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- Being mentored includes several stages of progression:
  - 1) the mentee watching the mentor conduct casework (in both the field and in the laboratory/mortuary)
  - 2) the mentee assisting the mentor conduct casework
  - 3) the mentee performing the casework himself/herself whilst under the direct supervision/oversight of the mentor.

- Advice and assistance must be provided *in real time* on casework (it is conceivable that this could be accomplished with secure video conferencing) in such a way that the mentor can view all aspects of the casework undertaken in the laboratory/mortuary and/or the field (search and recovery).
- The mentor should provide written documentation relating to the mentee's involvement in casework, case reports and training and carry out an annual Objective Setting Assessment.
- The mentor should provide advice and assistance provided on other aspects of professional development, such as research and publication, career advancement, job applications, progression through BAFA, EAFS, AAFS, etc. membership categories and registration.

## PEER REVIEW

BAFA defines "peer review" as follows:

- Peer review is both a quality assurance measure and a process of self-evaluation and regulation. It constitutes the oversight of both an individual's performance and the final written product (e.g. case file and report) of a forensic anthropology laboratory/mortuary examination (and/or search and recovery operation in the field). Peer review is designed to engage both the individual conducting the review and the individual whose work is being reviewed in a dialogue, where both learn from one another, to the betterment of the practice of the discipline and the conduct of its professional members.

BAFA forensic anthropologists, irrespective of the level of qualification (I, II or III), are expected to engage in the peer review process on their casework. It is recognised that peer review occurs either within or external to one's organisation or employer and all peer review must be undertaken via the confidential and secure sharing of case report documents and images (e.g. photographic, radiographic, etc.) either physically or electronically prior to their submission to the investigating officer, pathologist or court. The purpose of this process is to ensure that the documentation provided by the practitioner to the above officials/agencies is, above all, correct in all its particulars with the conclusions well-supported scientifically. Due to issues of confidentiality and non-disclosure, it is helpful (but not strictly necessary) that peer-review occurs among individuals of the same organisation.

The individual conducting the peer review should be assessing the following:

1. Whether the particulars of the case and its requirements are within the expertise of the practitioner who has undertaken the work
2. Whether the particulars of the case have been researched thoroughly and whether the literature cited is appropriate to the matter at hand.
3. Whether the practitioner has adhered to best practice in the assessments undertaken in the analysis of the case according to relevant Standard Operating Procedures and/or scientifically accepted methodology and/or, if there is deviation from SOP's, that the reason for this is clearly stated, justified and justifiable.
4. Whether the document itself is clearly presented, properly formatted and free of typographical and factual errors.



5. That quality of images (if present) and captions is clear and easily understood.
  6. That the case file is maintained according to the required professional standards of note taking and documentation appropriate to a Forensic practitioner and in accordance with the BAFA code of practice, ethics and professional standards in Forensic Anthropology and the Forensic Science Regulator's codes of practice and conduct (15.2 – 15.3).
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