SCHOOL OF Criminal Justice and Criminalistics

CFSI California Forensic Science Institute

Forensic Specialist Certificate Program Policies

Program Payment Schedules

Students are expected to submit each payment by the posted due date to remain in good standing in the certificate program. The deposit is non-refundable, and no refunds of any other payment will be issued to a student after the start date of the cohort in which they are enrolled. Please note: a $25 late fee will be assessed for each late payment.

Schedule and Attendance

The Forensic Specialist Program offers a two-track weekend course that provides 120 hours of training in Friction Ridge Examination (FRE) and 180 hours in Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) over five months. The schedule for each cohort is available for review before student enrollment begins. Each cohort is limited to 24 students.

All courses require in-person attendance. Students must complete all requirements for each track to earn the track completion certificate. Attendance in both tracks is mandatory. The FRE track courses are scheduled on Friday (4-8 pm), Saturday (8 am–4 pm), and Sunday (8 am–4 pm). The CSI track courses are scheduled on Saturday and Sunday (9 am–7 pm). Short breaks and lunch are scheduled each day.

Friction Ridge Examination Track Details

All presentations are emailed before each meeting. If you are absent, you are responsible for reviewing and understanding the material for each quiz.

- There are 3 quizzes, and you must pass each with a minimum grade of 70%. You will have 1 opportunity to retake a quiz. If you do not achieve a passing grade, you will not receive a Certificate of Completion.

- The final moot court is graded pass/fail. You must pass it to receive a Certificate of Completion for the course.

- Assignments are mandatory. You will have "take-home" assignments to complete between classes.

- Access to and the ability to use Microsoft PowerPoint or Google Docs are required.

Please note that we will print handouts only when absolutely necessary. We encourage you to bring a laptop, tablet, or similar device to class with all email materials. If you are unable to do so, please let us know so we can print the handouts for you. Please note that no PowerPoint presentations will be printed due to their size.

A great deal of information is covered during the 6-week block, so please be on time for class each day.

Program Overview

Participants will gain practical, hands-on experience in evidence collection, documentation, and processing. This work demands strong critical thinking, attention to detail, effective written and oral communication skills, physical endurance in challenging environments, and the ability to perform under pressure. The courses include lectures, student presentations, and intensive hands-on activities.

The certificate program trains individuals to become friction ridge examiners and prepares them for fieldwork in crime scene investigation. All physical activities and simulations mirror real-world case scenarios faced by fingerprint examiners and crime scene investigators. This includes exposure to visual materials and simulated crime scenes depicting violent crimes. Program completion requires demonstrating knowledge, skills, and abilities through practical exercises, written reports, mock crime scenes, and moot court presentations.

Students admitted to the certificate program must be able to do the following:

The student must meet the physical requirements, including mobility, balance, coordination, vision, and dexterity, for each course activity. Exercises are conducted both indoors and outdoors. When outdoors, students may encounter heat, cold, wind, rain, and other weather conditions. Most courses require students to stand for extended periods, lift up to 25 lbs., and climb, stoop, bend, crouch, kneel, and reach above and below shoulder level.

Participants who demonstrate competence and complete all courses for each track will receive a separate Certificate of Completion at the end of each track. Competency will be assessed through course exams, participation in lab activities, indoor and multiple outdoor mock crime scene practicums, a final indoor and outdoor mock crime scene, and a mock courtroom testimony presentation. Students must earn a minimum grade of 70% on each exam. Students scoring below 70% may retake the exam. Those who do not achieve at least 70% on the second attempt may continue in the program and will receive a Certificate of Attendance instead of a Certificate of Completion for that track.

Course Descriptions

Introduction to Friction Ridge Analysis

This course is conducted primarily at a laboratory bench and in a classroom.

Friction Ridge Examination Process

This course is conducted primarily at a laboratory bench and in a classroom.

Courtroom Testimony and Report Writing for Friction Ridge Examination

This course is conducted primarily at a laboratory bench and in a classroom.

Basic Photography Course (40 hours)

This course covers the fundamental principles of operating an SLR camera and its accessories. Students bring their assigned photography equipment, including SLR cameras, lenses, tripods, and other accessories, to various indoor and outdoor locations. Hands-on activities often require standing for extended periods. Students capture different angles and compositions by setting up a tripod on the floor or another surface for their SLR camera, or by holding it while crouching, kneeling, or climbing. Operating the camera controls also requires manual dexterity to adjust focus and lighting settings. About 60% of class time is spent standing, bending, crouching, squatting, or stooping.

Crime Scene Photography Course (40 hours)

This course applies photography principles to document simulated crime scenes. Students bring their assigned photography equipment, including SLR cameras, lenses, tripods, and accessories, to various outdoor locations. Hands-on activities often require students to stand for extended periods. They capture different angles and compositions by setting up a tripod on the floor or other surfaces, or by holding the camera while crouching, kneeling, or climbing. Operating the camera controls also requires manual dexterity to adjust focus and lighting settings. Approximately 60% of class time is spent standing, bending, crouching, squatting, or stooping during practical activities.

Fingerprint Processing and Development Course (20 hours)

This course teaches techniques for developing latent fingerprints. Processing is performed at the laboratory bench under a fume hood, using an alternative light source and a superglue fuming chamber. About 40% of class time is spent standing during hands-on activities.

Specialized Impression Photography and Recovery Course (20 hours)

This course involves frequent standing, bending, crouching, kneeling, reaching, and twisting to take technical photographs using a tripod-mounted camera, an off-camera flash, and a cable release on various vertical and horizontal surfaces, as well as preparing casts of 3D

shoe impressions on uneven dirt surfaces in outdoor locations. About 70% of class time is spent standing, stooping, bending, kneeling, crouching, and lifting during practical activities.

Sketching, Measuring, and Collecting Crime Scene Evidence Course (20 hours)

This course involves frequent standing, bending, crouching, kneeling, reaching, and twisting while sketching, measuring, and collecting evidence at simulated crime scenes spanning indoor and outdoor environments. About 70% of class time is dedicated to these practical activities.

Mock Crime Scene Practicum (20 hours)

This course involves frequent standing, bending, crouching, kneeling, reaching, and twisting to photograph the final mock crime scene, which extends from indoors to outdoors; taking technical photographs of impression evidence using a tripod-mounted camera with an off-camera flash and a cable release cord; and sketching, measuring, and collecting evidence. About 90% of class time is dedicated to these practical activities.