

The American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, Inc.®



A non-profit organization incorporated in the District of Columbia for certifying qualified examiners in forensic handwriting comparison and all other facets of questioned document examination.

Sponsoring Organizations

*American Society of
Questioned Document Examiners*

Canadian Society of Forensic Science

*Southeastern Association of
Forensic Document Examiners*

*Southwestern Association of
Forensic Document Examiners*

ABFDE is also recognized by

American Academy of Forensic Sciences

The International Association for Identification

*The Mid-Atlantic Association
of Forensic Scientists*

Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists

**ABFDE is accredited by the Forensic Specialties
Accreditation Board.**

BACKGROUND

The American Board of Forensic Document Examiners, Inc.® (ABFDE) was established in 1977 to identify qualified forensic document examiners capable of providing essential professional services. Within its mandate, the Board provides a program of certification in forensic document examination with the dual purpose of serving the public interest and promoting the advancement of forensic science. In purpose, function and organization, therefore, the ABFDE is analogous to certifying boards in other scientific fields.

At its inception, the Board was sponsored by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences. Today the Board is sponsored by the Canadian Society of Forensic Science, the American Society of Questioned Document Examiners, the Southwestern Association of Forensic Document Examiners, and the Southeastern Association of Forensic Document Examiners, and also is recognized by the American Academy of Forensic Sciences, the International Association for Identification, the Mid-Atlantic Association of Forensic Scientists, and the Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists.

The ABFDE is the only certifying body that can claim such sponsorship and recognition.

The Board is composed of elected officers and directors who serve staggered terms, and a Professional Review Committee which upholds the ethical and professional rules of conduct that are set out in the ABFDE Bylaws.

OBJECTIVES

The Board's objectives are two-fold: to establish, maintain and enhance standards of qualification for those who practice forensic document examination, and to certify applicants who comply with ABFDE requirements for qualified specialists. In doing so, the Board aims to safeguard the public interest by ensuring that anyone who claims to be a specialist in forensic document examination does, in fact, possess the necessary skills and qualifications.

Among the Board's diplomates are both examiners in private practice and examiners from federal, state, county, and metropolitan agencies, including crime laboratories accredited through the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors. This includes nationally and internationally recognized organizations such as: The Federal Bureau of Investigation; the United States Secret Service; Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the United States Postal Inspection Service; the Internal Revenue Service; Canada Border Services Agency; the United States Army Crime Laboratory; and the United States Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

As qualified experts in the field, a number of diplomates have written authoritative books on a variety of topics related to document examination.

CERTIFICATION

Certification is open to permanent residents of the United States of America, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand and is based on an applicant's record of education, training, experience, and achievement, as well as the results of the Board's formal examination process.

QUALIFICATIONS

General: To qualify, applicants must be of good moral character, reputation, and integrity, and must possess high ethical and professional standing.

Educational: Applicants must have earned a baccalaureate degree from an educational institution. Acceptable institutions include those accredited by regional accrediting commissions recognized by the U.S. Office of Education, as well as other institutions recognized by the ABFDE.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

To apply, proof must be shown of a full-time training period of at least two years (or equivalent) in a forensic laboratory recognized by the Board.

In addition, applicants need to supply as references the names and addresses of three qualified Forensic Document Examiners who are recognized by the

Board and who can attest to the applicant's qualifications for certification. References from persons other than Forensic Document Examiners are evaluated on an individual basis.

At the time of their application for certification, applicants must be actively engaged in the practice of forensic document examination. Applicants must also be able to demonstrate a record of appropriate professional activities in forensic document examination.

Forensic Document Examination is the application of document examination to the purposes of the law. Forensic Document Examinations are conducted when either elements of or an entire document's authenticity or authorship are in question. Examinations can include the identification of handwriting, signatures, and typewriting; the detection of alterations; analysis of inks and papers, stamps, photocopying or printing processes, and writing instruments; determination of the sequence of writing; or dating of documents.

EXAMINATIONS

In addition to meeting the qualification requirements set out above, applicants must also take comprehensive written, practical and oral examinations that are based on a wide range of problems frequently encountered in document examination. Eligible applicants are required to undergo these examinations within two years of having their applications approved. Any applicant who fails to pass the examination may apply for retesting after six months.

EXPLANATION OF TERMS

Although not intended to be selective or restrictive, the terms "acceptable to the Board" and "recognized by the Board" refer to an established laboratory or individual whose reputation can be proven or is known to be favorable.

For a directory of ABFDE Diplomates or further information about ABFDE and forensic document examination, go to:
www.abfde.org