SENIOR CRIMINALIST

DEFINITION

Under direction, provides technical guidance and training to other professional laboratory personnel and has functional responsibility for managing a specific program for the Forensic Science Division; performs the most complex duties and responsibilities of the Criminalist II; and performs related duties as required.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university in a natural, physical or forensic science or a closely related field AND five years of full-time experience in applying scientific techniques in a laboratory setting with proficiency in the area of specialization, including experience explaining and presenting laboratory tests in a court of law as an expert witness. A master’s or higher level degree in one of the relevant fields may substitute for two years of the required experience.

LICENSE OR CERTIFICATE

A valid driver’s license is required at the time of appointment and must be maintained for continuous employment.

May require licenses and/or certification as required by specific assignment (see SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS).

SUPERVISION EXERCISED

Exercises functional lead responsibility over a program.

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

This is the technical leader in the Criminalist job class series. Incumbents perform the most difficult assignments and provide technical guidance or manage a program in one of the following areas: Quality Assurance/Quality Control, CODIS or DNA.

EXAMPLES OF DUTIES (The following is used as a partial description and is not restrictive as to duties required.)

Identify operational requirements of assigned program in accordance with accreditation standards by professional forensic science laboratory associations.

Coordinate workflow, monitor work progress and review testing and analysis upon completion to ensure adherence to established standards, thoroughness and presence of proper documentation.

Assign and review work assignments, train staff in proper work methods and techniques, give input into performance evaluations and make recommendations for hiring new staff.

Provide information to Supervising Criminalist to assist with budget development including purchase of new equipment and supplies.

May perform any of the Examples of Duties found on the Criminalist II job class specification.
JOB RELATED AND ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Full Performance *(These may be acquired on the job and are needed to perform the work assigned.)*

**Knowledge of:**
Washoe County and Washoe County Sheriff’s Office policies and procedures as they relate to duties performed as a Criminalist and civilian employee.

Rules of forensic evidence, evidence procedure, chain of custody and integrity of evidence.

Courtroom procedure, witness, and expert witness testimony, demeanor and appearance.

Quality assurance/quality control methods and principles.

Federal, state and local laws regarding collection and preservation of evidence for use in court and its legal admissibility (i.e., rules of evidence, search and seizure law, etc.).

Nevada legal system as it pertains to testifying in court as an expert witness.

Program management as relevant to specialized program assignment.

**Ability to:**
Train staff in work methods and procedures to ensure compliance with a safe working environment.

Plan, develop and implement new testing methods and procedures.

Provide technical guidance and training to laboratory personnel engaged in biological, physical and chemical analysis related to scientific crime detection.

Perform any and all Criminalist II duties.

Interact considerately with victims, suspects, witnesses, hospital staff and others involved in the crime/death scene investigation.

React quickly, calmly and appropriately in hostile and/or dangerous situations.

Provide training to user agencies as it relates to crime scene investigation support.

Analyze information, apply scientific principles and reach logical conclusions.

Perform comprehensive criminalistics laboratory testing and analysis of physical evidence.

**Entry Level** *(Applicants will be screened for possession of these through written, oral, performance or other evaluation procedures.)*

**Knowledge of:**
Principles and methods of collecting, packaging, receiving and storing property and evidence.

Safe work methods and safety regulations pertaining to the work, including the handling of biological and hazardous materials and firearms.

Record keeping methods and procedures.

Principles and practices of analytical chemistry, including organic and inorganic.

Modern methods of classifying, indexing, filing and preserving laboratory records and evidence.
Forensic laboratory procedures, techniques, terminology, equipment and materials.

Standard sources of information and of current literature in the field of forensic science.

**Ability to:**
Perform complex chemical, instrumental and microscopic analysis and other complex examinations as required.

Evaluate work priorities, procedures and processes to determine their effectiveness and efficiency.

Analyze and present scientific information both orally and in writing, in a clear and concise manner.

Communicate effectively, both orally and in writing.

Maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work, including various law enforcement personnel, suspects, victims, and the general public.

Exercise sound judgment and make appropriate decisions under adverse circumstances and project consequences of actions.

Witness catastrophic death scenes and autopsies.

Exercise emotional control, especially under stressful circumstances.

Accurately observe, record, and recall information.

Maintain confidential data and information.

Use a personal computer and a variety of software packages

**SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS** *(Essential duties require the following physical skills and work environment.)*

Ability to work in standard office and laboratory environments, as well as various indoor and outdoor off-site locations. Ability to stand on slippery, uneven or unsteady surfaces for an extended period of time. Ability to frequently stand, walk, stoop, crouch, squat and kneel. Ability to use scientific and standard office equipment. Ability to work under conditions involving exposure to noise, electrical energy and chemicals. Ability to lift and move objects or deceased individuals weighing up to 100 lbs. Visual acuity to distinguish basic colors and shades of colors. Ability to tolerate/work under conditions involving exposure to inclement weather conditions, infectious diseases, insects/parasites (maggots, bed bugs, fleas, etc.), decomposed remains and other strong odors, noise, fumes, gases, smoke, dust, solvents and chemicals, and blood and airborne pathogens.

If assigned to the Biology/DNA or Breath Alcohol Section, the following additional minimum requirements must be met:

**Biology/DNA Section:**
A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university in a natural, physical or forensic science with twelve (12) semester hours of coursework as required by the FBI Quality Assurance Standards (QAS) in:

- biochemistry
- genetics
- molecular biology
- statistics or population genetics

**Breath Alcohol Section:**
A bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university in a natural, physical or forensic science with twenty-four (24) semester hours in the study of chemistry, or eighteen (18) semester hours in the study of chemistry and one year of full-time laboratory experience analyzing alcohol in a forensic setting as required by NRS to be certified as a Forensic Analyst of Alcohol (FAA).
Staff is required to participate in the Forensic Science Division’s Proficiency Testing program and successfully complete annual proficiency tests.

Must be willing to travel outside of Washoe County to perform crime/death scene investigations including rural and desert environments.

Must be willing to accept shift work, on-call assignments, and a non-standard workweek.

Selected candidates must complete and submit a Personal History Statement and pass an extensive background investigation, submit a set of fingerprints, pass a pre-employment medical examination, including a drug screen and complete a Computerized Voice Stress Analysis (CVSA) examination.

*This class specification is used for classification, recruitment and examination purposes. It is not to be considered a substitute for work performance standards.*