During the 84th Legislative Session, the Texas Legislature passed SB-1287, which required all forensic analysts to be licensed.

Pursuant to its legislative mandate, the Texas Forensic Science Commission established qualifications and adopted administrative rules with regard to forensic analyst licensing that are published in Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 651, Subchapter C. Requirements for forensic analyst and/or technicians to become licensed include minimum education requirements, specific coursework requirements, successful completion of a General Forensic Analyst Exam, in addition to other requirements.

Requirements by forensic discipline are listed in § 651.207 of the Texas Administrative Code. Traditionally, most forensic scientists begin with a bachelor of science degree in natural science (e.g. chemistry or biology). This is important because forensic scientists must have a solid understanding of basic scientific principles before these are applied in a legal setting. Due to the competitive nature of forensic science today, an advanced degree in natural or forensic science is now common.

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

Not all states require forensic analysts to be licensed, but Texas has been a leader in forensic science reform for over a decade. Throughout the nation, new standards are in development for all the forensic disciplines at the federal level. This is being accomplished through the OSAC for Forensic Science, administered by the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The Department of Forensic Science at Sam Houston State University is a recognized leader in forensic science education. It offers graduate degrees in forensic science and was the first in the nation to offer a PhD in Forensic Science in 2015, following recommendations from the National Academic of Science.

If you plan to pursue a career in forensic science and are currently majoring at the undergraduate level in the basic sciences at SHSU, here is what you need to know:

The Department of Forensic Science offers an online minor that pairs well with natural science majors. Once you have graduated with the required major for your forensic discipline, and have met the undergraduate coursework requirements, an accredited forensic laboratory in Texas may require you to take the General Forensic Analyst Exam. The examination is comprised of seven domains. These seven domains were chosen due to their general application across all forensic disciplines. The crosswalk between each domain and the applicable FORS course at SHSU is shown below:

- Evidence Handling
- Basic Statistics for Forensic Application
- Brady/Michael Morton Act
- Expert Testimony
- Professional Responsibility
- Human Factors
- Root Cause Analysis

The Department of Forensic Science has included these topics in its graduate curriculum for many years; however, students majoring in science may not have been exposed to all of these topics. Therefore, courses offered in the forensic science minor can assist students meet these requirements, improving workforce readiness, or competitiveness for graduate study in forensic science.

The minor in forensic science requires the completion of 18 credit hours of approved FORS or CRIJ courses. FORS course offerings include:

- FORS 3366 - Forensic Science
- FORS 3380 - Intro to Forensic Chemistry
- FORS 4310 - Physical Evidence Techniques
- FORS 4317 - Applied Stats for Forensic Sci
- FORS 4320 - Fundamentals of Forensic Bio
- FORS 4330 - Fingerprint Examination
- FORS 4364 - Crime Scene Investigation Techniques
- FORS 4380 - Ethics & Prof Practice

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