



Firearm and Toolmark Examiner Training Academy

Introduction

Nichols Forensic Science Consulting provides a low cost, web-based option to its Firearm and Toolmark Examiner Training Academy. This option leverages web-based technology to deliver, monitor, and critically review training of students, preparing them to perform monitored and supervised casework for the host laboratory.

Training

The complete academy consists of three units – Foundational Unit, Skill Building Unit and Competency Building Unit. During these units, students will receive instruction through fifty (50) different pre-recorded webinars dealing with the scientific foundations of firearm and toolmark identification, its practice and application. Trainees are provided with practical exercises designed to progressively develop comparative examination skills for bullets and cartridge cases. These practical exercises are developed and provided, with many including bullets and cartridge cases fired using consecutively made barrels, firing pins, breechfaces and extractors. Practical exercises also include mock cases and mock trials. Students are also provided with written exercises and reports, reading assignments, along written and practical examinations.

Benefits

Laboratories rarely have the time to assign an examiner to the full-time training of students as quality, comprehensive training requires significant time and resources. This web-based option significantly reduces the load of the laboratory examiner requiring them to perform minimal tasks related to the training. These include test firing of firearms, demonstrating the use of the stereo and comparison microscopes including proper mounting, alignment and lighting of specimens, and monitoring written examinations.

Nichols Forensic Science Consulting serves as the primary training officer for students. In this capacity, Nichols FSC provides all instruction, training materials, practical exercises (with some exceptions), and critical and thorough review and feedback of work performed by the students including written assignments and reports, practical exercises, and examinations, both written and practical. The hosting laboratory will receive regular updates with respect to the progress of students.

Cost

The cost of the entire web-based academy is \$32,500 per trainee.

Options

Available options include pricing per unit or select modules within the unit. Those options are included on the pricing sheet.

However, if any modules within the Skill Building or Competency Building Units are desired, students must complete all modules from the previous unit(s). For example, Nichols FSC will not deliver training in Skill Building without the student also taking all modules within the Foundational Unit. Similarly, training will not be provided in the Competency Building Unit without the student also taking all modules in the Foundational Unit and Skill Building Units. This is because the Skill Building and Competency Building Unit assume full comprehension of everything contained in the Foundational Unit.

If the laboratory does not have a trained examiner available to perform its required tasks, an option for on-site visits to perform that portion of the training can be made available. This will be at an additional, significant cost to include travel and consultant time.

Exclusions

The following are not included as part of the web-based Firearm and Toolmark Training Academy:

- Practical exercises involving firearm examinations – Nichols FSC will provide instruction in how to examine firearms but, does not provide training in the hands-on examination of firearms to include disassembly, safety and test firing.
- Any area of shooting reconstruction to include distance determination, trajectory analysis, and gunshot residue. These services are outside the scope of the Academy.
- Any training related to the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN). Nichols FSC is not authorized by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (BATF) to provide such training.
- Visits and tours to manufacturing plants.
- Proficiency Testing – Nichols FSC does not provide proficiency tests to contracting agencies. All written and practical assignments, exercises and tests are designed to be learning exercises and NOT final tests of competency. Prior to beginning casework, it is expected that the agency will provide trainees with the necessary competency testing that allows them to have the authority to work firearm and toolmark related casework.
- Certification – Nichols FSC does not certify or license individuals in firearm and toolmark identification.

Additional Information

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