CRIMINALIST I

Definition

Under general supervision, performs professional duties involved in the collection, preservation, and scientific analysis of evidence encountered in the investigation of crimes.

Distinguishing Characteristics

This is the entry level of the Criminalist series. It is distinguished from the Criminalist II, or journey level, in that entry level personnel receive close supervision from more experienced criminalists. Promotions to the journey level of Criminalist II are made on a merit basis subject to recommendation of the Department Head and approval by the Director of Personnel.

Essential Functions

• Performs physical, chemical, biochemical, biological, or instrumental analysis and microscopic examinations in the identification and comparison of physical evidence such as hair, fibers, fabrics, body fluids, poisons, narcotics, paint, glass, bullets, and firearms; determines proper testing techniques.

• Operates, calibrates, troubleshoots and performs minor repairs on laboratory instruments.

• Consults with and advises law enforcement officers and prosecuting attorneys regarding the nature of evidence or the results of laboratory analysis and their meaning; stays current in trends and innovations in the field of forensic science.

• Makes accurate observations, records and reports of test results; testifies in court as an expert witness on findings and interpretation.

• Responds to crime scenes to gather and preserve evidentiary items for laboratory analysis.

Other Functions

• Makes technical presentations to outside groups.

• Teaches classes or seminars and trains law enforcement officers.

• Performs related work as required.
Employment Standards

Graduation from an accredited college or university with a baccalaureate degree in chemistry, biochemistry, criminalistics, forensic science, biology, or a closely related laboratory science field. Relevant course work must contain a laboratory component. Course work must included 24 semester or 36 quarter units in chemistry including general chemistry, quantitative analysis, organic, and inorganic chemistry OR 12 semester or 18 quarter units in biochemistry, genetics and molecular biology (molecular genetics, recombinant DNA technology) or other subjects which provide a basic understanding of the foundation of forensic DNA analysis, as well as statistics and/or population genetics as applied to Forensic DNA analysis. Course work must satisfy DNA Advisory Board criteria and must contain a laboratory component. An advanced degree without the stated undergraduate course requirements will not meet the employment standards, unless the curriculum of the advanced degree covered the appropriate core courses.

License/Certification

A valid Class C California motor vehicle operator's license must be maintained throughout employment.

Knowledge of: the theoretical and analytical principles of natural and physical sciences including organic, inorganic, biochemistry, physical chemistry, biology, and other applicable fields and subdisciplines and the ability to apply these principles to scientific examinations as related to a forensic laboratory; mathematic principles and statistics; laboratory safety practices; operation, use and care of instruments and scientific equipment.

Ability to: learn and apply evidence collection and preservation procedures; handle and prioritize multiple tasks and manage time efficiently and effectively; make and record detailed observations, follow verbal and written instructions, and perform assigned tasks according to prescribed procedures; apply Federal, State, and local laws, codes, and regulations pertaining to forensic science; apply policies, rules, and regulations governing a forensic laboratory; apply operations, methods, and techniques of forensic laboratory equipment, recognize anomalies, formulate hypotheses, solve problems, and take appropriate action; use and operate a computer and common software; communicate clearly and concisely both orally and in writing; establish and maintain effective working relationships with those contacted in the course of work, including law enforcement officers and attorneys.

Physical requirements - ability to label small items of evidence, pipet small volumes, use small tools, distinguish and match patterns, identify and distinguish color, match or discriminate between colors, use respiratory gear.

Background requirements - Applicants must be able to pass a background investigation and shall not have been convicted of a felony in the State of California or in any state, or any federal jurisdiction, nor of any offense which would have been a felony if committed in this state. The background evaluation may consider areas such as illegal drug use, financial responsibility, driving record, criminal record, previous employment, and honesty. A polygraph may be given. Revised; November 2007; #4519; JS4519