Undergraduate Student Handbook
Penn State Forensic Science Program

Program Office 329 Whitmore Laboratory
Office Phone  (814) 867-0460
Office Hours  Monday – Friday
             0800 – 1600
Program website  https://science.psu.edu/bmb/forensicscience
PURPOSE

This Forensic Science Undergraduate Handbook is a supplement to the university’s Policies page, found at https://policy.psu.edu/policies, and the University Bulletins, found at https://bulletins.psu.edu/undergraduate/colleges/eberly-science/forensic-science-bs/. The Policies page should be consulted for details pertaining to academic, financial, safety, and other policies. The Bulletin provides information specific to the Forensic Science major, such as required course work and entrance-to-major requirements.

Mission Statement

The mission of the Forensic Science Program at Penn State is to provide a unique, holistic educational experience with opportunities for specialization through an intense, highly practical approach to forensic science education to benefit the global forensic science community and the criminal justice system. The program will provide an open, welcoming, creative, and adaptable learning environment for its students, staff, and faculty.

Ethics

Academic dishonesty includes, but is not limited to cheating, plagiarism, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, unauthorized prior possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without permission from the instructor, tampering with the academic work of other students, or the improper or unauthorized use of artificial intelligence.
A student charged with academic dishonesty will be given verbal or written notice of the allegation by the instructor. The written notice may be an email that is automatically sent to students after the instructor has filed an allegation on the university’s online academic integrity violation reporting system. The online reporting system allows for formal due process of the allegation and allows both the student and instructor to present their side of the situation. If a resolution cannot be reached between student and instructor online, the matter is referred to the Eberly College of Science Academic Integrity committee. The committee will hold a formal hearing to resolve the matter.

**Code of Mutual Respect and Cooperation**  
For Faculty, Staff and Students in The Eberly College of Science

The Eberly College of Science is a community dedicated to personal and academic excellence. The Code of Mutual Respect and Cooperation was developed to embody the values that we hope our faculty, staff, and students possess, consistent with the aspirational goals expressed in the Penn State Principles. The University is strongly committed to freedom of expression. Consequently, the Code does not constitute University or College policy and is not intended to interfere with an individual’s academic or personal freedoms. We hope, however, that individuals will voluntarily endorse the 12 principles set forth in the Code, thereby helping us make The Eberly College of Science a place where every individual feels respected and valued, as well as challenged and rewarded.

The Eberly College of Science Code of Mutual Respect and Cooperation can be found at [https://science.psu.edu/climate-and-diversity/code-mutual-respect-and-cooperation](https://science.psu.edu/climate-and-diversity/code-mutual-respect-and-cooperation)

**Learning Objectives**

1. Students will develop an understanding of the scientific principles of crime scene investigation and reconstruction, including evidence collection and preservation.

2. Students will receive intensive hands-on training in forensic laboratory methodologies with respect to the analysis of evidence.

3. Students will develop written communication skills for presentation of their findings in accordance with established professional guidelines.

4. Students will develop oral communication skills for discussing the scientific method in a laboratory setting and effectively testifying in a court of law.

5. Students will understand the importance of accreditation and certification in the forensic science community.

6. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of the interaction between law enforcement, scientists and the legal profession.

7. Students will develop an understanding of the importance of professionalism and ethical behavior in the forensic science community.
ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Information about academic requirements such as required course work, entrance-to-major requirements, suggested academic plans, graduation requirements, supporting courses, etc. can be found on our website here: https://science.psu.edu/bmb/forensics/ugrad/advising

To search for courses, or register, add, drop, or late drop a course, use www.lionpath.psu.edu.

ADMISSIONS, AP, AND TRANSFER CREDITS

For information about admission to the Forensic Science program, see the entrance-to-major requirements at https://science.psu.edu/bmb/forensics/ugrad/advising.

For information regarding AP credits counting towards requirements, go to https://admissions.psu.edu/academics/credit/ap/. Please remember Penn State courses that build on previous knowledge, such as CHEM 110 and CHEM 112, are designed with what you learned in pre-requisite Penn State courses in mind. If you find yourself lost because you took an AP course that did not cover something that your classmates learned in their Penn State course equivalent (for example, substituting AP Chemistry for CHEM 110), you will need to plan to make-up the deficit. Go to your professor or TA’s office hours, tutoring, form a study group, or find some way to get that information.

For information about transfer credits or taking courses at another institution, see https://admissions.psu.edu/info/future/transfer/credit/.

ADVISING

The Forensic Science program has a dedicated undergraduate adviser, Noelle Waggett, to assist students with academic and career planning, change of assignment (COA) students from PSU Commonwealth campuses, and transfer students from other universities. Students are highly encouraged to meet with their academic adviser at least once a semester to ensure that degree requirements are being met in a timely manner. https://science.psu.edu/bmb/forensics/ugrad/advising

Students can contact Noelle at nrw107@psu.edu or schedule an appointment with Noelle using Starfish: https://sites.psu.edu/starfishinfo/

FILING A COMPLAINT OR RAISING PROGRAM CONCERNS

Complaints and concerns from our students are taken very seriously. If you have a complaint or concern directly relating to the instruction provided by the Forensic Science Program, you are encouraged to express that concern at any time to any member of the faculty and staff.

If you do not wish to raise your complaint with the faculty or staff directly involved, you are encouraged to report it to the program Director via email or in person. Your issue will be documented, and the Director will attempt to resolve the complaint to the best of their ability. If it is a faculty or staff
complaint, the Director will address the issue with that individual staff or faculty member to find a resolution. Curricular or academic complaints will be handled on an individual basis. You will be informed when your complaint has been addressed.

For non-urgent issues or general feedback, you can leave comments on your SEEQs or the Exit Survey taken during your final semester.

If you have a complaint that you wish to raise beyond the confines of the program, you have the right to file a complaint or concern with the University or with FEPAC if the complaint is related to a perceived violation of FEPAC’s accreditation standards, policies, or procedures. You can go to https://studentaffairs.psu.edu/report to find information on how and where to file a complaint to the university office that addresses your specific issue, or to make a general complaint to Student Affairs that they will then pass on to the correct office.

**UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH AT PENN STATE**

To find information about research opportunities at Penn State, go to the Undergraduate Research and Fellowships Mentoring (URFM) website at https://urfm.psu.edu/. URFM has information about how to find research projects and opportunities, funding for research, exhibiting research, and other research and fellowship information.

Many of our students conduct research with faculty and labs outside of the forensic science program (through URFM or by asking a professor with whom they have taken a class), but you are welcome to speak with any of our faculty members about research opportunities that they may have in their lab groups if you are interested specifically in forensic science research. However, remember there are limited forensic faculty and undergraduate research opportunities in the program due to time, funding, and space. For a complete list of recent research conducted by our undergrads, see https://science.psu.edu/bmb/forensics/ugrad/research.

**INTERNSHIPS**

For information about internships, check out the Office of Science Engagement’s webpage https://science.psu.edu/science-engagement about the science internship program.
https://science.psu.edu/current-students/career-development/science-internship-program

The process outlined on the internship page is mostly for students seeking to earn course credit for an internship, but there are also answers to general FAQs about internships such as ‘when should I start looking for an internship?’. You can also contact Dustin Zettle in the Office of Science Engagement at dmez5150@psu.edu or make a Starfish appointment with him. Dustin is the Engagement Specialist and can offer guidance in the internship search process.

Many students who are seeking an internship that is not for course credit will find one by searching the web or contacting agencies with which they might want to intern via phone or email. It is suggested you begin looking six months-to-a-year in advance of when you want to intern, as there are often due dates for applications several months before the internship will take place (often due to a required background check).
STUDY ABROAD

For information about study abroad opportunities at Penn State, check out the Office of Science Engagement’s webpage https://science.psu.edu/current-students/education-abroad

If you are considering studying abroad, we highly recommend that you try to do either one of the short-term programs that occur over a school break or summer, or that you do a full semester in your first or second year while the majority of your classes are general education courses and pre-requisites. There are currently no study abroad programs that will allow you to take upper-division forensic science courses during the fall or spring semester at another university; choosing to study abroad during a fall or spring semester may put a student behind the pace of the suggested academic plan and result in the student having to stay an additional semester or year to complete their forensic science degree.

FORENSIC SCIENCE STUDENT LIFE

LIVING LEARNING COMMUNITY (LLC)

A student who resides in a Living Learning Community (LLC) has the opportunity to live and learn with classmates who share similar interests but bring many different personalities and traits to the environment. The student will live with other members of the LLC in a close-knit community (or "house") located in University housing. LLC members will have the opportunity to participate in field trips, group dinners, and other social and educational activities. There is a Forensic Science LLC in which all students in your LLC are forensic science majors and pre-majors. For more information about LLCs, check here: https://liveon.psu.edu/university-park/living-learning-communities

FORENSIC SCIENCE CLUB

The Forensic Science Club at Penn State is a club open to students of all majors who have an interest in Forensic Science. They hold academic events such as Symposium, where students can listen to the Penn State forensics faculty and other prestigious professionals in the field from all over the country speak, and the Haunted House fundraiser each fall in which a portion of the proceeds go to the organization Hope Exists After Rape Trauma (HEART). The club also does mini-workshops, social events, and outreach events with elementary, middle, and high schools in the community to get kids educated about and interested in the field of forensic science. For more information: https://orgcentral.psu.edu/organization/forensic-science-club-at-penn-state

DELTA DELTA EPSILON INTERNATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE HONOR SOCIETY (DDE)

The mission of the Society is to function as an honor society for students and professionals of forensic science. The activities of the Society shall be designed to stimulate academic achievement, promote community understanding, and advance the fields of forensic science. DDE has done workshops, field trips, fundraisers, and other events in addition to promoting their academic mission. To join, undergrads must be forensic science majors who have completed 47 credits worth of coursework towards their
degree and have a minimum grade point average of 3.3 overall. For more information: https://orgcentral.psu.edu/organization/delta-delta-epsilon

FORENSIC STUDENT’S SOCIAL HOUR (FSSH)

The Forensic Student's Social Hour provides a space for Forensic Science Students at the Pennsylvania State University to meet and socialize with other Forensic Science Students. Members must be Forensic Science majors or pre-majors and can be at any campus in the Commonwealth. FSSH is based in University Park travels to and has events with Commonwealth Campuses to involve all Forensic Science pre-majors. For more information: https://orgcentral.psu.edu/organization/forensicstudentssocialhour