

Minutes of Forensic Science Society of Ghana Meeting

Venue: Conference room of 37 Mortuary, Anatomical Pathology Department, 37 Military Hospital, Accra.

Date: Saturday, February 6, 2016

Time: 11: 22am

Members Present (6)

Pet-Paul Wepeba	– Acting Chairperson General Forensic Scientist Previous employment: 37 Military Hospital Present Employment: Lecturer in the MPhil Anatomy and Forensic program at SMS, KNUST
Isaac Badu	Erasmus Mundus Masters in Forensic Science Alumni
George Olipoh	Erasmus Mundus Masters in Forensic Science Alumni, specialization in toxicology/drugs of abuse/fire investigation Currently assisting in a Clinical trials project in Volta Region
Cpt. Emmanuel Adusei	Erasmus Mundus Masters in Forensic Science Alumni, Currently working as Chemical Pathologist at 37 Military Hospital
Alex Oppong	Digital Forensic Scientist Head of Forensic Department, KPMG, Accra
Aaron Amankwaa	– Acting Secretary Recent MSc Forensic Science graduate from University of Strathclyde, with specialization in forensic biology, Currently looking forward to gain employment as assistant lecturer in the forensic program at Biochem. dpt. KNUST

The meeting commenced at approximately 11:22am with prayer said by Mr Wepeba. Since the society has not yet appointed officers, Mr Wepeba chaired the meeting. The chairperson briefed the house about progress made so far to form the group. He stated that he had prepared the constitution and the code of ethics and the house must review and approve them.

Mr Wepeba suggested we begin the meeting by reviewing the constitution and the code of ethics.

Mr Alex Oppong suggested we introduce ourselves and state our specialization and what we are doing currently before we begin the discussions. (The information given by each member are noted by their names above). Mr

Oppong also suggested we read the constitution aloud and make changes/comments where necessary.

1) The constitution: this was read by Mr Amankwaa and continued by Mr George Olipoh.

Name of group: Mr Alex Oppong asked the chairperson if the name of the group is available. Mr Wepeba said he has already checked and the name has not been registered by any other group.

The chairperson at this point reminded the house about the registration requirement of 50 members of the group and records of activities for at least 12 months. Mr Amankwaa said that according to the Professional Bodies Registration Act there could be an exception for a profession with limited professionals.

Goals: Mr Amankwaa suggested the house include the following to the goals of the group: development and implementation of regulations in forensic science and practice, support and promote research and development in forensic science, provide opportunities for education, training and development for forensic scientists. Mr Alex Oppong also said some of the goals fall under the broad category of education of members and could be taken out. He also suggested we clarify the goal to visit forensic related-establishments.

Mr Amankwaa further said that some of the goals are more of specific objectives to achieve the goals and a separate section could be created to include these. He suggested we can have several specific objectives to achieve the goals and if we are going to do this the specific objectives must be time bound.

Governing Body: Extension of presidential term after serving two consecutive terms: The house agreed that such term, if approved, shall expire after two years (1 term) rather than the next general meeting.

Quorum of Council: Mr Amankwaa suggested the quorum should be 2/3 of the Council members. Mr Wepeba said it may be difficult to get 2/3 of members at the initial stage. Mr Olipoh and Mr Oppong said that could be considered in future.

Quorum of General Meeting: Again Mr Amankwaa suggested we rather make the quorum a percentage (2/3) or majority of members rather than 12 full members. Mr Alex Oppong said we could utilize technology such as Skype so that members could join in if they cannot be physically present.

Office: Mr George Olipoh asked the house if a registered office is required to register the group. Mr Wepeba said we could use any available place for that purpose.

Full Members: In order to get enough full members and considering the limited number of specialists in Ghana, Mr George Olipoh suggested that the requirement for full membership should be relevant tertiary qualification and 1 year relevant forensic experience or relevant forensic experience and/or current employment in a forensic discipline. The house agreed that the number of experience for the latter should be at least 5 years. The house agreed that the suggested changes will be reviewed in future.

Honorary Member: Mr Alex Oppong said this category must recognize individuals who have made significant contribution to the profession rather than to the Society alone.

Student Member: Mr Oppong asked the house about a situation where a person has over 5 years' experience in forensics but currently a student. The house agreed that such a person will qualify as a full member per the current criteria.

Associate Member: The house finally agreed to the suggestion of Mr Oppong that this category must recognize graduates of a forensic science degree program with no work experience or do not meet the full membership criteria.

Mr Amankwaa asked the house if the initial criteria for Associate membership could be changed to Affiliate membership. The house agreed to this suggestion.

Register of members: Mr Wepeba suggested subsection 7.1b could be deleted. Mr Oppong also suggested subsection 7.3.1 can also be deleted since the details of members in good standing will be published on the group's website.

Protection of personal data: Mr Alex Oppong said we should be conscious of data privacy if we want to collect personal information or contact details from members. He said there are some legal requirements we need to fulfil if we are storing personal information.

[Mr Isaac Badu joins the meeting at approximately 1:25pm. Mr George Olipoh briefed Isaac on the previous discussions].

Subscription: Mr Amankwaa asked if we can consider long term subscriptions. He gave the Ghana Science Association as an example who take 10 years subscriptions. The house agreed we maintain only the annual subscriptions at the moment.

Requirement of full members to have attended 3 CPDs to be eligible for the annual re-registration: The Chairperson asked what happens if a full member fails to meet this requirement. Mr Emmanuel Adusei said we must maintain and enforce this requirement. Mr Opong said the Society must ensure that at least 5 CPDs are organized for members annually and the Society must also recommend external forensic conferences to members.

Eligibility of Officers: Mr Opong said that payment of annual subscriptions must be added to the criteria. The house agreed to his suggestion.

Titles and duties: Mr Wepeba suggested that a Deputy Secretary must be included to assist the General Secretary. Mr Opong also said management of the group's website must be part of the duties of the secretary.

Patrons: Mr Emmanule Adusei asked the house why we need 4 patrons. The Chairperson said four will allow us to bring together distinguished individuals from different areas in Ghana to support the group. He gave examples of areas such as parliament, legal profession, medical field and chieftaincy institution.

Request for special meeting: Mr Isaac Badu suggested that the request should be by 2/3 of members rather than 15 members.

Inclusion of any other business to agenda of meetings: Mr Alex Opong suggested we change 21 days to 48 hours and the secretary's notice to not less than 24 hours. He said new issues or other business for discussion may come up after the 21 days. The house agreed to his suggestion.

Branch and Specialist group meetings: Mr Isaac Badu noted that general meetings of the group take precedence over any branch meetings.

Finance: Mr Alex Opong suggested that the Vice President should also be signatory with the Society's financial institutions. However, the VP can only sign in the absence of the President and in such cases, the president must provide the VP with an authority note. The house agreed to his suggestion to include the VP.

Alterations to rules: Mr Wepeba, the Chairperson, asked if the secretary should send notice of any changes to members or publish such information on only the website. Mr Isaac Badu said we should not be restricted to the website but use different communication methods including emails, website and whatsapp.

Mr Amankwaa asked the house if there will be remuneration for office holders, especially the work of the secretary which may become a full time job. The house agreed that at the moment office holders will work as volunteers but that

could be considered in future. Moreover, any expenses incurred in the conduct of the Society's business shall be reimbursed.

After completing the constitution review, the Chairperson suggested we defer the code of ethics to another meeting and the house agreed.

2) Nomination and Election of officers: Mr Alex Oppong suggested members should submit their nominations then we can set a date to vote.

The house agreed the nominations and election should be conducted on the group's whatsapp page. The following timeline was set for this purpose.

Wednesday, February 17, 2016: Posting of positions for nominations

Sunday, February 21, 2016: Nominations closed

Monday – Tuesday, February 22 – 23, 2016: Voting of Officers

Wednesday, February 24, 2016: Announcement of officers

3) Website: The house agreed this should be discussed after election of officers

4) Letter head: Mr Adusei said we should register a post box as a group. Mr Amankwaa said we can only do that after registration since our certificate of incorporation is required for registration. Mr Wepeba asked if anyone has a post box we could use temporarily on our letter head. Mr Amankwaa said he has a private box at KNUST which could be used on our letter head.

5) Appointment of Patrons: Mr Wepeba suggested members must brainstorm about potential individuals who could serve as patrons. He suggested we consider areas such as

a. the Chieftaincy institution: example, Asantehene or Okyehene

b. Ghana Bar Association

c. Medical Officer: example, Prof Akosa

d. Parliament

6) Scientific conference and other programs: Mr Wepeba said we can host our conference at KNUST great hall, CCB or SCB auditorium. He further said if we want to have the conference it must be as soon as possible since he will leave KNUST by April. Mr George Olipoh and Mr Adusei said the conference will be an opportunity for members to present their research work.

Mr George Olipoh asked the house what programs we could organize as a group apart from the conference.

The Chairperson said Mr Albert Antwi Bosiako has exposure with the Ghana media and we could engage the public through him.

Mr Alex Oppong suggested we could operate a forensic science journal to generate funds in future.

Mr Wepeba asked the house how to get other members on board. Mr Adusei said he knows a few individuals working as forensic scientists at the Ghana Standards Authority and he will contact them.

The House finally concluded that the other matters should be discussed at the next meeting scheduled for Saturday, March 5, 2016, at the 37 Military Hospital.

The acting secretary was charged to make the suggested changes in the constitution and send to all members. The acting secretary said he will be able to complete the changes by Tuesday, February 9, 2016. The house also charged him to manage the nominations and voting of officers on the page.

7) Closing: Mr Emmanuel Adusei moved for the closure of the meeting and he was seconded by Mr Alex Oppong.

The closing prayer was said by Mr Isaac Badu