



Latent Prints FAQs

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1. General minimum educational requirements for your section:

- A Bachelor's degree is required, but other labs may require it to be in a science, like Biology or Chemistry. There will be more opportunities if you pursue a Bachelor of Science.

2. What advice would you offer someone considering this career path?

- Be willing to move for an entry level job. It is a niche job and not every city has openings in the field. Don't get discouraged if it takes longer than you would like. It can be a lengthy process, especially if the agency has background checks.
- Learn about what the job is really like. Try to intern/volunteer, or if possible, attend the International Association of Identification (IAI) Conference as a student. This is a much better source for what the job is like than what you see on TV.

3. Besides a degree(s), what other things does HFSC look for in future analysts in this section?

- Future leaders. We look for people who can fit well within our team and can lead others in the future. This includes the ability to communicate and collaborate well with others but are also confident and assertive enough to stand by their work and hold others accountable.

4. What is a typical day/week like for a forensic analyst in this section?

- Work week is a typical 40-hr week, M-F, during daytime hours. Latent Processing is done in lab, and you are on your feet for a large portion of the time. Latent Comparisons are typically done on a computer, whether that is in office or remotely at home.

5. Is it typical to work overtime? How often?

- No, it's rare to work overtime.

6. How often do analysts in this section appear in court to testify?

- We could receive several subpoenas a year, but only a few may actually require our testimony. We probably testify about 1-3x a year on average.

7. How important is communication in the daily function of your job?

- Communication is essential. For one case to be completed, at least three examiners are involved in some capacity. Effective, professional communication is vital to completing the work in a timely and accurate manner.

8. In your opinion, what do you think is the most challenging part of your occupation?

- Like any science, it is always changing. There are new technologies, new discoveries, and new court challenges all the time. This can make it challenging to keep up and requires continuing education throughout your career.

9. What advancement opportunities are available in your line of work?

- There are opportunities to work as a latent print processor, latent print examiner, or a hybrid of both. There are advancement opportunities to be a supervisor, technical lead, or manager.

10. What is a common misconception people have about your job?

- “Doesn’t a computer just identify the prints for you?” While we utilize tools such as AFIS (automated fingerprint identification systems) to help locate possible sources for a latent print, a computer is never the one to identify someone. An examiner must look at the latent and compare it to the possible subject themselves, reaching their own conclusion independent of what the computer did.

11. How is the work/life balance for an analyst in this section?

- Our team is very cognizant that there is life beyond these walls and there needs to be a concerted effort towards ensuring stress is minimized. We accomplish this with flexible scheduling, work variety, and team building activities