

# Death Investigation Certificate

## What is Death Investigation?

Medico-legal death investigation combines medicine and law into a common discipline, incorporating multiple forensic specialty areas. Investigators, scientific and medical personnel, police, paramedics, clergy, and other support staff participate in death investigation in different ways. The study of death investigation trains students to identify and assemble a set of investigative tasks that are performed at every death scene. Modern medico-legal death investigation has evolved into a discipline of forensic science using both forensic medical practitioners and forensic investigators. While the typical portrayal of medico-legal death investigation in television programs, such as “CSI” and “Law and Order,” sometimes over-dramatizes contributions related to time frames and scientific techniques in solving crimes, the basic aspects of the work are more accurately portrayed than not.

## What do Death Investigators Do?

Death investigators respond to death scenes that include murders, suicides, accidents, or natural deaths. Their expertise aids them in reading death scenes and documenting their findings with photographs and written reports. Their main role is to collect and interpret information from a death scene in order to come to a final determination as to the manner of a death.

## About Us

Reflecting the interdisciplinary aspect of this area of study, UWM’s program is sponsored jointly by the College of Letters and Science, the College of Health Sciences, and the Helen Bader School of Social Work. Courses include both lecture presentations and laboratory experiences that cover fundamental areas of forensic science and provide unique instruction on essential techniques. Courses are taught by UWM faculty members and forensic professionals in the Milwaukee community.



## Career Opportunities

A certificate in Death Investigation will prepare students for the American Board of Medico-Legal Death Investigators national certifying exam. The Board grants and issues certificates to individuals who have demonstrated their mastery of investigation techniques, and who have successfully completed rigorous examination of their knowledge and skills in the field of medico-legal death investigation. Receiving certification from the ABMDI attests to an individual’s specialized knowledge and demonstrates his/her proficiency in the standards and practices necessary to conduct medico-legal death investigations. Students who complete the certificate will be eligible to find careers in the fields of law enforcement, death investigation, pathology, and toxicology.

## Certificate Requirements

Students must complete a minimum of 24 credits to obtain the certificate in death investigation. A basic knowledge of biology and chemistry is required. Students must complete the following two courses prior to being accepted to the certificate program:

*Certificate programs are similar to minors. They are comprised of 15 to 26 credits in a specialized subject matter, and include coursework from different departments. Certificates can be combined with a degree program, or they are available as stand-alone options for individuals who already hold a bachelor’s degree from any accredited college or university. Many certificates also will enroll individuals with a strong interest in the topic area but who do not have a degree.*

- Chemistry 100 – Chemical Science (4 credits)
- BioSci 100 – Survey of Zoology (3 credits)

Once in the program, the following courses are required:

- Introduction to Forensic Science (3 credits) (Cross-listed course which may be found in Anthropology, Chemistry, Clinical Lab Sciences or Criminal Justice)
- Medico-Legal Death Investigation (3 credits) (Cross-listed course which may be found in Anthropology, Chemistry, Clinical Lab Sciences or Criminal Justice)
- Criminalistics (3 credits) (Cross-listed course which may be found in Anthropology, Chemistry, Clinical Lab Sciences or Criminal Justice)
- Anthropology 403 – The Human Skeleton (3 credits)
- Anthropology 405 – Forensic Anthropology (3 credits)
- Criminal Justice 110 – Introduction to Criminal Justice (3 credits)
- Criminal Justice 480 – Criminal Evidence and Investigation (3 credits)
- One of the following:
  - » Clinical Lab Sciences 610 – Pharmacology (3 credits)
  - » Health Care Administration 212 – Drugs Used and Abused (3 Credits)

Students must complete at least one half of the required credits on the UWM campus. A minimum grade point average of 2.5 must be achieved in all classes required for the certificate.

## Other Recommended Courses

The following courses are recommended, but are not required to complete the certificate. Some of these courses have prerequisites so students should plan accordingly.

- Internship in Forensic Science (3 credits) (Cross-listed course which may be found in Anthropology, Chemistry, Clinical Lab Sciences or Criminal Justice)
- Anthropology 404 – Heredity, Environment and Human Populations (3 credits)
- BioSci 539 – Laboratory Techniques in Molecular Biology (4 credits)
- Chemistry 524 – Intermediate Analytical Chemistry (3-5 credits)
- Chemistry 602 – General Biochemistry (3 credits)
- Clinical Lab Sciences 560 – Molecular Diagnostics (2 credits)
- Clinical Lab Sciences 561 – Molecular Diagnostics Laboratory (1 credit)
- Clinical Lab Sciences 555 – Toxicology and Therapeutic Drug Monitoring (1 credit)
- Clinical Lab Sciences 620 – Forensic Pathology (2 credits)

## Related Certificates

Students considering death investigation also may want to explore the certificate in forensic science and the certificate in forensic toxicology. Students in those areas explore evidence analysis and toxic substances, respectively.

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For More Information:  
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