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**Standard for Reporting Written Results from Friction
Ridge Examinations**



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Standard for Reporting Results from Friction Ridge Examinations

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Foreword

This document has been developed with the objective of improving the quality and consistency of friction ridge examination practices.

The American Academy of Forensic Sciences established the Academy Standards Board (ASB) in 2015 with a vision of safeguarding Justice, Integrity and Fairness through Consensus Based American National Standards. To that end, the ASB develops consensus based forensic standards within a framework accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), and provides training to support those standards. ASB values integrity, scientific rigor, openness, due process, collaboration, excellence, diversity and inclusion. ASB is dedicated to developing and making freely accessible the highest quality documentary forensic science consensus Standards, Guidelines, Best Practices, and Technical Reports in a wide range of forensic science disciplines as a service to forensic practitioners and the legal system.

This document was revised, prepared, and finalized as a standard by the Friction Ridge Consensus Body of the AAFS Standards Board. The draft of this standard was developed by the Friction Ridge subcommittee of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science.

Questions, comments, and suggestions for the improvement of this document can be sent to AAFS-ASB Secretariat, asb@aafs.org or 401 N 21st Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80904.

All hyperlinks and web addresses shown in this document are current as of the publication date of this standard.

ASB procedures are publicly available, free of cost, at www.asbstandardsboard.org.

Keywords:

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Standard for Reporting Results from Friction Ridge Examinations

1 Scope

This document prescribes the minimum administrative and technical information that are required to be included in friction ridge examination reports.

This document does not include the requirements for supporting documentation of reported elements (e.g., case notes, custody documents), or testimony.

2 Normative References

There are no normative references.

3 Terms and Definitions

For purposes of this document, the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1

administrative information

Records—such as evidence receipts, chain of custody, and submission forms (electronic or hard copy)—that do not constitute data or information resulting from examination work.

3.2

administrative review

An evaluation of the report and supporting documentation for consistency with organizational policies and for editorial correctness.

3.3

amended report

A report used to document any modifications from a previously issued report, particularly those that affect or correct an original result or interpretation.

3.4

conclusion

source conclusion

Opinion stated by an examiner after interpretation of observed data. The opinion is the personal judgement that the observed data can offer support for one proposition over another. A conclusion is distinct from a “proposition.”

3.5

conflict

A condition in which two or more examiners disagree on a suitability decision or source conclusion.

3.6

consensus review

A type of examination in which a reported decision or conclusion is determined that reflects the collective judgment of a group of examiners.

3.7

customer

Client, authority, organization or person(s) requesting the forensic services.

3.8

Forensic Service Provider

FSP

Organization or individual that conducts and/or supplies forensic services.

3.9

interpretation

Explanations for the observations, data and calculations.

3.10

item

Object, substance or material that is collected, derived or sampled as part of the forensic process.

3.11

observation

Recognizing and noting an occurrence.

3.12

opinion

View, judgment, belief – takes into consideration other information in addition to observations, data, calculations and interpretations.

3.13

report

Communication of outcomes of the forensic process.

EXAMPLE Observations, findings, interpretations, conclusions and/or opinions.

3.14

result

The product of the forensic service provider. This term is broad and includes observations, data, calculations, interpretations and opinions.

3.15

stakeholder

interested party

A person or organization that can affect, be affected by, or perceive itself to be affected by a decision or activity.

3.16

supplemental report

A report used to document additional work performed with subsequent reporting of results.

3.17 technical review

A qualified second party's evaluation of reports, notes, data, and other documentation to ensure there is appropriate and sufficient support for the actions, results, conclusions, opinions, and interpretations.

3.18 verification (phase of examination process)

Independent examination by one or more examiners to ascertain if a decision, conclusion, or opinion is reproduced or is in conflict with the decision, conclusion, or opinion of another examiner.

NOTE 1 Verification may be implemented in multiple ways including blind verification, open verification and consensus review. The general term verification is inclusive of these various types.

NOTE 2 Verification is a quality assurance measure for friction ridge examination.

NOTE 3 The use of the term "independent" indicates an autonomous examination but not necessarily one without knowledge of a prior decision, conclusion or opinion.

4 Requirements

4.1 General

Forensic Service Providers (FSP) shall have a written policy detailing the requirements of friction ridge examination reports specific to their stakeholders' needs.

The information provided within a written report should be articulated so that all stakeholders can understand what is being communicated.

Other types of reporting results, such as verbal notification, preliminary results, or investigative leads, may be prepared and delivered by an FSP to suit the specific needs of their stakeholders.

4.2 Administrative Information

4.2.1 The following administrative information shall be included in the written report:

- a) title of report—specific to type of analysis being reported (e.g., latent print, tenprint, processing examination report);
- b) reporting FSP and location;
- c) date of report;
- d) any other FSP that performed any portion of the examination (e.g., contracted laboratories);
- e) unique case identifier;
- f) unique identifier for submitted items (e.g., item number, evidence number, serial number);
- g) description of items relevant to the examination;

NOTE For non-original evidence (e.g., lifts, photographs, or digital images), a statement indicating the reported description of original item.

- h) unique identifier of exemplars used for comparison (e.g., date of birth, universal control number, state identification number, local reference) and name, if available;
- i) means of indicating the end of the report (e.g., signature or the word “END”);
- j) disposition and/or retention of evidence and exemplars (where applicable);
- k) pagination, including the total number of pages;
- l) name and signature of the examiner(s) who authored the report;
NOTE Digital signatures are acceptable where controlled.
- m) supplemental reports shall reference previously issued reports;
- n) amended reports shall be issued to customer without delay if technical or administrative inaccuracies are discovered after report has been released; when amended reports are issued, an accompanying statement describing the nature of the change shall be included.
- o) Statement that additional materials are available upon request where applicable (e.g., case notes, images, standard operating procedures, quality manual, qualifications of the examiners).

4.2.2 The following administrative information should be included in the written report.

- a) Any aliases or AKA's of an individual shown on an exemplar.
- b) Glossary and definitions of specific technical terms utilized including any abbreviations used (e.g., this can be achieved as an appendix, provided resource, memo).
- c) Origin of any exemplar used (e.g., provided as an evidence item, obtained from archive, or obtained from digital repository).

4.3 Technical Information

4.3.1 The following technical information shall be included in the written report (as applicable).

- a) Indication of forensic process used to perform the examination, unless communicated separately to stakeholders in writing (i.e., memorandum).
- b) Any deviation from FSP approved forensic process, policy and/or procedure.
- c) Assumptions and generally accepted or known limitations of any forensic process or procedures utilized to produce the examination results¹.

¹ The forensic process or procedures are not to be confused with latent print processing. Consult Std 015 *Standard for Examining Friction Ridge Impressions*. [draft available for review upon request asb@aafs.org]

- d) Statement that latent print processing was conducted.
- e) Statement describing items submitted for examination that were not examined, where applicable (e.g., known exemplars, ridge detail not assessed for utility, evidence items not reviewed for presence of ridge detail, no comparisons conducted).
- f) Statement describing that analysis was performed and all the resulting utility decisions of friction ridge impressions.

Any utility decisions which the FSP allows by policy, that were not considered during examination, shall be reported. For example, if considering database utility and the examiner has not considered utility for source conclusions, this shall be reported.

- g) Indication of all friction ridge impressions suitable for source conclusions (e.g., ridge detail annotations or latent designators).
- h) Statement describing comparisons that were conducted.
- i) Statement describing biometric database (ABIS) searches that were conducted, and which ABIS databases were searched (e.g., local, state, federal).
- j) A summary of the search results for ABIS searches conducted.

NOTE This is not intended to require or recommend the inclusion of all individual candidates generated as a result of a database search.

- k) Statement concerning what was not searched in ABIS databases.
- l) Statement indicating unidentified friction ridge impression(s) that are retained in the unsolved latent or tenprint databases.
- m) If the agency has a policy to report on utility decisions or ABIS candidate list results that are preliminary, or investigative leads only, that information and limitations of the assessments shall be indicated within the report as well as the process to have preliminary results reviewed or verified.
- n) List with description of each item or unique identifier, indicating friction ridge impressions not suitable for source conclusions, or no friction ridge impressions were detected by the reporting examiner.

4.3.2 The following technical information should be included in the written report (as applicable).

- a) Statement detailing that the presence of friction ridge detail on an item of evidence does not indicate the significance or time frame in which the print was deposited.

4.4 Examination Conclusions

4.4.1 The following information related to examination conclusions shall be included in the written report.

- a) unique identifier of exemplars used for report conclusion (e.g., date of birth, universal control number, state identification number, local reference) and name, if available.
- b) All comparisons which have been completed
- c) Whether or not conclusion(s) were verified. If blind verification or consensus review verification was used, that should be indicated in the report.
- d) Where an inconclusive conclusion is included, a statement detailing the reasons for this conclusion.
- e) Statement indicating that limited comparisons were conducted or comparisons were deferred, where applicable.
- f) Statement when the conclusion is based upon simultaneous impressions or aggregate of information (i.e., impressions that do not stand alone).
- g) The definition and range of source conclusions used by the FSP in the body, as an annex/footnote to the written report, or website reference.
- h) Statement when a reported conclusion was the result of a conflict resolution process or consensus review and FSP policy (e.g., FSP policy dictates the most conservative conclusion is reported out).

4.4.2 Conclusions resulting from the examination of observed data within friction ridge impressions may be reported utilizing one of the three following frameworks.

- a) Conclusions expressed as an expert opinion utilizing knowledge, training, experience, skill, and education.
- b) Conclusions expressed as an expert opinion utilizing quantitative support from a statistical model.
- c) Conclusions derived directly from and entirely dependent upon a statistical model.

4.4.3 If reporting source conclusions under framework 4.4.2 a) or 4.4.2 b), a statement that the opinions and interpretations are based upon professional judgement of the examiner shall be included in the report.

4.4.4 The following information related to examination conclusions should be included in the written report.

- a) The anatomical origin including the specific finger, palm or toe compared (only for source identification and inconclusive with similarities conclusions).

- b) Amended reports should be issued if changes in technology or understanding of underlying scientific principles significantly change the magnitude of examination conclusions and/or when cases are re-assessed. When amended reports are issued, an accompanying statement describing the nature of the change should be included.

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