



Questioned Documents Section - 2016

J14 The Value of Skill Task Assessments (STA)

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have a better understanding of STAs. Attendees will also gain an understanding of the similarities and differences between STAs and existing historically utilized proficiency testing programs.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by demonstrating the impact and benefits that skill task testing can provide as a training tool and mechanism to periodically self-assess and evaluate an individual or group level. Repeated participation in STAs also provides a means to document the reliability of specific methods of analysis in forensic document examination.

STAs are practical exercises that provide additional training and a measure of the examiner's skill on a specific examination task. The purpose of a proficiency test is to test the examiner's ability to examine a "case" that may include one or more document examination methodologies. STAs typically focus on one task and are designed to provide the opportunity for the Forensic Document Examiner (FDE) to work an extensive training exercise that allows the participant to evaluate his/her reasoning process to the chosen range of conclusions. STAs are also another tool for documentation that support the reliability of forensic document examination methodologies.

STAs are blind assessments that can be used for training purposes or for documentation of an individual error rate. The forensic document examination task of determining whether signatures were genuine, spurious, disguised, or simulated has been the focus of STAs offered by LaTrobe University and Skill-Task Assessment Training and Research Inc. (ST²AR). Once testing is closed, each participant receives a Post-Test Information Package (PTIP) containing test results that include the group error rate and the participant's individual error rate (if the answer sheet is returned). The PTIP allows the participant to self-evaluate his or her performance in comparison to other participants. It also provides feedback since there is a true known answer for each questioned signature. Whether the participant voluntarily submits his/her answer sheet for evaluation or uses the test for self-assessment, STAs allow the participant to adjust the "calibration" in their decision-making process with the opportunity to re-evaluate their choice of opinions for each signature.

This presentation will assist the attendee in understanding the differences between skill task assessments and proficiency tests. The design of STAs allows the examiner to complete an extensive training exercise on a single task and to evaluate his or her reasoning process to the chosen range of conclusions. STAs also further establish the reliability of forensic document examination methodologies.

Skill Task Assessment, Proficiency Tests, Reliability