
Technical Procedure for Case Documentation

1.0 Purpose – To provide guidelines for documenting casework in the Firearms Unit.

2.0 Scope – This procedure applies to all cases examined in the Firearms Unit.

3.0 Definitions

- **Clerical review** – A review of the case file documentation for grammatical and typographical correctness.
- **Technical/administrative review** – A combined review that involves both an in-depth review of the examination documentation used as a basis for the findings and conclusions and their validity as stated in the Laboratory Report and a review of the case file documentation for consistency with Laboratory policy and for editorial correctness.
- **Verification review** – A review of any microscopic comparisons, serial number restoration attempts, GSR/pellet pattern examinations, and cases in which money was submitted with the evidence.

4.0 Equipment, Materials, and Reagents – N/A

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Case Notes

- 5.1.1** When a worksheet is used, all fields shall be completed within the limits of the Forensic Advantage (FA) System.
- 5.1.2** The case notes shall include all worksheets, notes, sketches, photographs, and any other documentation used to arrive at the conclusions reported. FA generated or stored notes or worksheets may include sketches, photographs and miscellaneous documentation (e.g., manufacturers' literature); these items shall be imported into the Case Record Object Repository. If any item is scanned, it shall include the Laboratory case number and examiner's initials.

5.2 Case Report

- 5.2.1** After the case notes are complete, the Laboratory Report shall be created.
 - 5.2.1.1** Verify the information contained in the Report against the submission information found on the Request for Examination Form or its electronic equivalent. Follow the reporting guidelines as prescribed in the State Crime Laboratory Quality Manual and the Laboratory Procedure for Reporting Results.
- 5.2.2** List the evidence received in the case.
 - 5.2.2.1** Item designation number assigned to the submitted item(s) by the Forensic Scientist (e.g., Q-1, K-5, R-23, etc.).

- 5.2.2.2 The Laboratory item number and the Agency item number, in parentheses, assigned to the submitted item(s) by FA [e.g., (Lab Item 1/Your Item 2)]. If the Laboratory and Agency item numbers are the same, they may be combined [e.g., (Item 1)].
- 5.2.2.3 The number of items associated with the listed Q, K, or R number (e.g., Three (3), One (1), Thirty-five (35), Numerous, etc.).
- 5.2.2.4 If known, the make or manufacturer of the submitted items (e.g., Smith & Wesson, CCI, Fruit of the Loom, etc.).
- 5.2.2.5 The caliber of the item(s) if applicable.
- 5.2.2.6 The description of the item(s) (e.g., pistol, safe door, T-shirt, fired jacketed hollow point bullet, etc.).
- 5.2.2.7 The serial number of the item, if known.
- 5.2.2.8 The model number of the item, if known.
- 5.2.2.9 For clothing items, the description may also include information such as size and color.
- 5.2.2.10 An example would be:

K-1 (Lab Item 1/Your Item 3): One (1) Hi-Point Firearms, caliber 45 Auto, semiautomatic pistol, Serial Number 123456, Model JHP.

5.3 Review Process

- 5.3.1 Prior to the generation of a Laboratory report, the Forensic Scientist or IBIS Technician (caseworker) shall send the case for a clerical review.
- 5.3.2 After completion of each report, the caseworker shall send the case for a required technical/administrative review.
- 5.3.3 Additionally, a verification review shall be requested for all microscopic comparisons, serial number restoration attempts, GSR/pellet pattern examinations, and for cases in which money was included with the evidence. This verification review shall be requested prior to the generation of a Laboratory report.
- 5.3.4 **Clerical Review**
 - 5.3.4.1 The Section Office Assistant, IBIS Technician, Forensic Scientists in the Firearms Unit, and personnel authorized by the regional Laboratory Forensic Scientist Manager (FSM) may serve as a clerical reviewer.
 - 5.3.4.2 The clerical review shall include:

5.3.4.2.1 A review of the case notes for grammatical and typographical errors.

5.3.4.2.2 Confirmation that all appropriate spaces in the worksheets are completed.

5.3.4.3 If any errors or omissions are found, the clerical reviewer shall return the review explaining the reason for the return in the space provided. The caseworker shall correct the errors or omissions and continue the review.

5.3.4.4 If no errors are found or if the correction of errors has been made, the clerical reviewer shall approve the case.

5.3.4.5 A clerical review is required in the Firearms Unit before the report has been created, but a caseworker may choose to add additional clerical reviews at any time.

5.3.5 Verification Review

5.3.5.1 Forensic Scientists in the Firearms Unit may serve as a verification reviewer of microscopic comparison conclusions with approval of the Firearms Unit Technical Leader. All Forensic Scientist I and higher positions in the Firearms Unit may serve as a verification reviewer of serial number restoration attempts and GSR/pellet pattern examinations. Any Forensic Scientist or the IBIS Technician may serve as a verification reviewer in all other situations.

5.3.5.2 The verification review shall include, if applicable:

5.3.5.2.1 Verification of all microscopic comparison conclusions.

5.3.5.2.1.1 Any evidence that needs microscopic verification shall be transferred to and from the designated reviewer unless the verification is performed in the presence of the caseworker.

5.3.5.2.1.2 If a difference in microscopic comparison conclusions should arise between the caseworker and the verification reviewer and the two cannot come to an agreement on a reported conclusion after additional discussions and examination, the review of the item(s) in disagreement shall be taken to a second reviewer. The second reviewer shall examine the item(s) in question and convey his/her conclusions to the caseworker and reviewer. If, after additional discussion among the three, no consensus can be reached regarding the conclusion for the item(s) in question, the most conservative results shall be reported.

5.3.5.2.1.3 Microscopic comparisons performed for the purpose of grouping items for IBIS entry need not be verified.

5.3.5.2.2 Verification of the accuracy of restored serial number examinations by visually observing the results.

5.3.5.2.3 Verification of the results of a GSR/pellet pattern examination.

5.3.5.2.4 Verification of the amount of any money included with evidence.

5.3.5.3 If any errors or omissions are found, the verification reviewer shall return the review explaining the reason for the return in the space provided. The caseworker shall correct the errors or omissions and continue the review.

5.3.5.4 If no errors are found or the correction of errors has been made, the verification reviewer shall approve the case.

5.3.6 Technical/Administrative Review

5.3.6.1 Technical/administrative reviews shall be assigned in accordance with the rotating reviewer schedule designated by the Forensic Scientist Manager. The schedule is maintained on the Section's shared drive.

5.3.6.1.1 The rotating reviewer schedule shall not apply to stop work cases.

5.3.6.2 All Forensic Scientist III and higher positions in the Firearms Unit may serve as technical/administrative reviewers.

5.3.6.2.1 For a tool mark case, the technical/administrative reviewer shall be qualified to perform tool mark examinations.

5.3.6.2.2 For stop work cases, Forensic Scientist I and higher positions may serve as technical/administrative reviewers.

5.3.6.3 The technical/administrative review shall include:

5.3.6.3.1 A review of the report and notes to ensure that all reported results are explained and supported by the notes.

5.3.6.3.2 A review of the report and the submission information included on the Request for Examination Form or its electronic equivalent to ensure the accuracy of the information in the report.

5.3.6.3.3 Confirmation of the inclusion of all required documents in the Case Record Object Repository.

5.3.6.3.4 Confirmation of the completion of required clerical and/or verification reviews.

5.3.6.4 If any errors or omissions are found, the technical/administrative reviewer shall return the review explaining the reason for the return in the space provided. The caseworker shall correct the errors or omissions and continue the review.

5.3.6.5 If no errors are found or the correction of errors has been made, the technical/administrative reviewer shall approve the case.

5.3.7 After approval of all reviews, the caseworker shall release the report.

5.4 Standards and Controls – N/A

5.5 Calibration – N/A

5.6 Maintenance – N/A

5.7 Sampling – N/A

5.8 Calculations – N/A

5.9 Uncertainty of Measurement – N/A

6.0 Limitations – N/A

7.0 Safety – N/A

8.0 References – N/A

9.0 Records

- FA Worksheets
- FA Case Report
- FA Case File Report

10.0 Attachments – N/A

Revision History		
Effective Date	Version Number	Reason
09/17/2012	1	Original Document
10/26/2012	2	Added 5.3.1 and 5.3.3 to reflect updated review process; moved clerical review information ahead of technical/administrative review; added verification review process (5.3.5).
12/07/2012	3	Added last sentence to 5.3.3; added 5.3.6.1.1 and 5.3.6.2.2.
02/15/2013	4	Removed Raleigh from the header; added the definition for verification review; 5.1.2 - changed “scanned” to “imported” and added last sentence; 5.2.1.1 - added “reporting” to the beginning of the last sentence; 5.3.4.1 - added language allowing personnel authorized by regional laboratory FSM to perform clerical reviews; 5.3.6.3.2 - added language regarding submission information.
09/06/2013	5	5.3.5.1 – clarified who may perform verification reviews; 5.3.5.2.1.1 – change “Forensic Scientist” to “caseworker”; 5.3.5.2.1.2 – changed “Forensic Scientist” and “original Forensic Scientist” to “caseworker”; 5.3.6.3.2 – added “or its electronic equivalent”.
10/16/2013	6	5.3.5.1 - changed who may perform verification reviews to require approval of technical leader; added issuing authority to header; removed reference to SBI form.
09/05/2014	7	Header and various subsections – corrected to reflect organizational change.