
Technical Procedure for Instrument Calibration and Maintenance

1.0 Purpose – To outline the schedules and procedures involved in the maintenance and verification of critical instrument calibration in the Firearm and Tool Mark Section.

2.0 Scope – This procedure applies to all critical instruments used in the Firearm and Tool Mark Section.

3.0 Definitions

- **Balance** – An instrument for measuring weight.
- **Calibration** – The process of determining, checking, or rectifying the graduation of any instrument giving quantitative measurements.
- **Calibration Check** – The process of periodically verifying the calibration status of an instrument by comparison with a reference standard.
- **Caliper** – A device consisting of two legs or jaws, one moveable and one stationary, used to measure diameter, thickness or distance between two surfaces.
- **Chronograph** – An electronic device used to measure and record the velocities of projectiles.
- **Comparison microscope** – Essentially two microscopes connected to an optical bridge which allows the viewer to observe two objects simultaneously with the same degree of magnification.
- **Critical instruments** – Instruments that have a significant effect on the accuracy or validity of the result of a test.
- **Grain** – A unit of weight. 7000 grains equal one pound. The grain unit is commonly used in American and English ammunition practice to measure the weight of components.
- **Performance Check** – The process of routinely assessing the calibration status of a digital instrument.
- **Micrometer** – An instrument used to measure accurately small distances, usually thickness or diameter.

4.0 Equipment, Materials, and Reagents

- Comparison microscopes
- Stereomicroscopes
- Balances
- NRA approved static weights
- Digital Measuring Device (DMD-48)
- Measurement tapes
- Calipers
- Micrometers
- Chronograph (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)
- Sound meter (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)
- NIST-traceable calibrated stage micrometer
- Leica Application Suite (LAS) software
- 10 g reference standard weight
- 1000 g reference standard weight (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)
- Hott-Rods™
- NIST-traceable ruler (12")
- NIST-traceable ruler (36")
- DMD-48 calibration rod (24")

- Gage block (0.500")
- Gage block (1.000")
- Forceps
- Cloth glove
- FA#3280 (U.S. Springfield Armory, caliber 22 Long Rifle, bolt action rifle, serial number 666A, Model M2) (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)
- Federal Gold Medal Target, caliber 22 Long Rifle, 40 grain solid lead bullet ammunition (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Overview

5.1.1 The Equipment Monitor (EM) shall be responsible for the maintenance of calibration standards and the calibration and calibration checks of critical instrumentation used in the Firearm and Tool Mark Section as defined in this procedure.

5.1.2 Each Forensic Scientist shall be responsible for completing performance checks as defined in this procedure.

5.1.3 NIST-traceable reference standards shall be stored in the Firearm and Tool Mark Section in a location sufficient to maintain control of the devices and protect them from damage or deleterious effects.

5.1.4 Documentation

5.1.4.1 The office of each Forensic Scientist shall contain a logbook or log sheet to be used for documenting the calibration and calibration check information of the critical instruments located in that office.

5.1.4.2 The Section EM shall maintain the logbooks for critical instruments not assigned to an individual Forensic Scientist.

5.1.5 Any instrument that does not zero, is broken, or falls outside of the instrument's tolerance range shall be marked "Out of Service" and either repaired or replaced.

5.1.5.1 Any Forensic Scientist who discovers unacceptable or anomalous behavior of critical instruments shall immediately notify the Section EM and the Section Forensic Scientist Manager.

5.2 Comparison Microscopes

5.2.1 Maintenance

5.2.1.1 The Leica Application Suite (LAS) measurement module of newly purchased comparison microscopes shall be calibrated prior to use.

5.2.1.2 Each comparison microscope shall be serviced and cleaned annually by an outside vendor.

- ### 5.2.2 Calibration Procedure

- All copies of this document are uncontrolled when printed.*

- 5.2.2.4 Go to the Acquire tab > Camera tab > Image Formats and set resolution to highest level (2592 x 1944, Interlaced Large HQ) for both captured format and live format.
- 5.2.2.5 Place both nosepieces to the 1X objective.
- 5.2.2.6 Adjust the focus with the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.600 inch and 1.000 inch.
- 5.2.2.7 Go to the Acquire screen > Camera tab > Calibration Settings field > Type. Select "Calculated."
- 5.2.2.8 Select "New" and then name as follows: objective and date (e.g. 1X, 12-15-10). After naming the file, choose "OK."
- 5.2.2.9 A red line will appear on the screen. Adjust the red line to extend 0.400 inch from 0.600 inch to 1.000 inch within the stage micrometer scale. Be certain that the red line starts and ends consistently in relation to the hash mark on the stage micrometer (e.g., if the red line starts along the right edge of the .6 hash mark, it must end along the right edge of the 1.0 hash mark).
- 5.2.2.10 Go to the Calibration Settings Tab and type in the value for the actual length of the line shown on the image (0.400) in inches. Choose "Save" in the Calibration Settings area.
- 5.2.2.11 Repeat the above procedure for each additional objective to be calibrated.
 - 5.2.2.11.1 For the 1X Objective with the 1.5 magnifier, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.700 inch to 0.960 inch and measure 0.260 inch for the calibration.
 - 5.2.2.11.2 For the 2X Objective, change both objectives to 2X, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.800 inch to 1.000 inch and measure 0.200 inch for the calibration.
- 5.2.2.12 Go to the Acquire screen > Camera tab > Calibration Settings field > Configuration drop down. Select each old calibration in turn and delete.

5.2.3 Calibration Check Procedure

- 5.2.3.1 The LAS measurement module of each comparison microscope shall be calibration checked using the stage (left or right) used during the calibration procedure.
- 5.2.3.2 Place the stage micrometer on the appropriate stage. The use of a blank piece of white paper under the stage micrometer will improve visibility.
- 5.2.3.3 In the LAS Software, click on the Setup Tab to verify the microscope's serial number.

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- 5.2.3.4** Go to Options > Preferences > Image and ensure the following settings:
- 5.2.3.4.1** “Always Confirm Image Name” and “Capture to fixed folder location” boxes are checked.
 - 5.2.3.4.2** “In this format” is set to “Tiff.”
- 5.2.3.5** Go to the Scale Bar field and be certain orientation is set to “Horizontal.”
- 5.2.3.6** Go to the Acquire tab > Camera tab > Image Formats and set resolution to highest level (2592 x 1944, Interlaced Large HQ) for both captured format and live format.
- 5.2.3.7** Acquire an image of the serial number from stage micrometer box (using the 0.4X objective) and save with the following file name format: Cal Stan, date, objective, stage, and initials of person performing the calibration check (e.g., “Cal Stan, 12-15-10, 0.4X, Right, ABC”).
- 5.2.3.8** In the “Image Data” area, type the microscope serial number in the “Description” field. In the Process screen, under the “Annotate” tab > “Information” field, select the check boxes for “Image Name”, “Description”, “Date”, and “Time.” In the “Actions” field, click “Merge”, then “Replace.” This will store the photo with the information inserted.
- 5.2.3.9** Place both nosepieces to the 1X objective.
- 5.2.3.10** Adjust the focus with the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.600 inch and 1.000 inch.
- 5.2.3.11** Acquire the image and save with the following file name format: Cal Check, date, objective, stage, and initials of the person performing the calibration check.
- 5.2.3.11.1** The images taken immediately following the recalibration of the microscope shall be named “Recal Check.”
- 5.2.3.12** In the “Image Data” area, add the serial number of the microscope in the “Description” field.
- 5.2.3.13** Go to the Process Screen, > Annotate Tab > Basic Annotation field, click “Show”. In the “Line” area, click “Show” and then choose “Distance Line” from the drop down menu. Measure an area of the stage micrometer that equals 0.200 inch and verify that the distance line reads 0.200 inch.
- 5.2.3.13.1** This measurement can be accomplished with the scale bar.
- 5.2.3.14** Under the Information Tab, make sure that “Image Name,” “Date,” “Time,” and “Description” are checked.
- 5.2.3.15** Click “Merge” and “Replace.”
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5.2.3.16 Repeat the above procedure (beginning with **5.2.3.10**) for each additional objective calibrated.

5.2.3.16.1 For the 1X Objective with the 1.5 magnifier, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.800 inch to 1.000 inch and measure 0.195 inch for the calibration check.

5.2.3.16.2 For the 2X Objective, change both objectives to 2X, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.800 inch to 1.000 inch and measure 0.185 inch for the calibration.

5.2.4 Performance Check Procedure

5.2.4.1 Place the reference bullet on the stage used during the calibration procedure.

5.2.4.2 Using the LAS measurement module, measure the width of the designated land impression.

5.2.4.3 The tolerance for this width shall be +/- 0.005 inch. If the measured width falls within this tolerance range, the successful performance check shall be recorded in Forensic Advantage (FA).

5.2.5 In the event that a performance check fails, a calibration check shall be performed by the Section EM or his/her designee before the LAS measurement module may be used in casework.

5.2.6 In the event that a calibration check fails, the following procedure shall be followed:

5.2.6.1.1 Supervisor/Forensic Scientist Manager is notified.

5.2.6.1.2 Vendor is notified of error/problem.

5.2.6.1.3 Supporting documentation is required; provide the **following information**:

- Serial number of microscope/camera.
- Specific objective(s) that failed.
- Date of failure/date equipment was taken out of service.
- Date that vendor was notified.
- Date that equipment was evaluated/corrected.
- Date that equipment was put back into service.

5.3 Stereomicroscopes

5.3.1 Maintenance

5.3.1.1 Each stereomicroscope shall be serviced and cleaned annually by an outside vendor.

- 5.3.1.2 Stereomicroscopes do not require calibration, calibration checks, or performance checks.

5.4 Balances

5.4.1 Maintenance

- 5.4.1.1 Each balance shall be serviced, cleaned, and certified annually by an outside vendor.
 - 5.4.1.1.1 The original record of this maintenance shall be maintained by the Section Document Custodian or his/her designee. A copy of the record may be placed in the pertinent logbook.
- 5.4.1.2 Each balance shall be calibration checked monthly by the Section EM or his/her designee.
- 5.4.1.3 Each balance shall be performance checked by the Forensic Scientist to whom the balance is assigned. The performance check shall be conducted each day the balance will be used in casework. If a performance check is conducted and the balance is subsequently powered off, the performance check shall be repeated before the balance is used in casework again.
 - 5.4.1.3.1 The performance check shall be conducted using a reference bullet. Reference bullets shall be unfired caliber 45 Auto, 230 grain, total metal jacketed bullets.

5.4.2 Calibration Check Procedure

5.4.2.1 Small Capacity Balances

- 5.4.2.1.1 Be certain the balance is level.
- 5.4.2.1.2 Turn on the balance and zero or tare the balance.
- 5.4.2.1.3 Be certain the balance is reading in grains.
- 5.4.2.1.4 Using forceps, place the 10 g (154.32 gr.) reference standard weight on the balance. Do not touch the standard weight with bare hands.
- 5.4.2.1.5 Record the resulting weight in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for each balance shall be +/- 0.05 grain.

5.4.2.2 Large Capacity Balance (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)

- 5.4.2.2.1 Be certain the balance is level.
- 5.4.2.2.2 Turn on the balance and zero or tare the balance.
- 5.4.2.2.3 Be certain the balance is reading in grams.

5.4.2.2.4 Using a glove, place the 1000 g reference standard weight on the balance. Do not touch the standard weight with bare hands.

5.4.2.2.5 Record the resulting weight in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for the balance shall be +/- 0.05 gram.

5.4.3 Performance Check Procedure

5.4.3.1 Be certain the balance is level.

5.4.3.2 Turn on the balance and zero or tare the balance.

5.4.3.3 Be certain the balance is reading in grains.

5.4.3.4 Place the reference bullet on the balance.

5.4.3.5 The tolerance for this weight shall be +/- 1 grain. If the measured weight falls within this tolerance range, the successful performance check shall be recorded in Forensic Advantage (FA).

5.4.4 In the event that a performance check fails, a calibration check shall be performed by the Section EM or his/her designee before the balance may be used in casework. If this calibration check should also fail, the balance shall be removed from casework as outlined in 5.1.5 above.

5.5 Trigger Pull Static Weights

5.5.1 Maintenance

5.5.1.1 Each set of static weights shall be calibration checked annually by the Raleigh Laboratory Section EM or his/her designee.

5.5.2 Calibration Check Procedure

5.5.2.1 All individual weights shall be weighed on the large capacity balance.

5.5.2.2 Be certain the balance is level. Turn on the balance and zero or tare it.

5.5.2.3 Be certain the balance is reading in pounds.

5.5.2.4 Place the weight carefully on the balance and record the weight in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for each static weight shall be +/- 0.05 pound.

5.5.2.5 Repeat this process for each of the static weights.

5.6 Digital Measuring Device (DMD-48)

5.6.1 Maintenance

5.6.1.1 The DMD-48 shall be calibration checked quarterly by the Section EM or his/her designee.

5.6.1.2 The DMD-48 shall be performance checked prior to being used in casework by the Forensic Scientist who will use it. The performance check shall be conducted each day it will be used in casework and for each separate case in which the DMD-48 will be used. If a performance check is conducted and the DMD-48 is subsequently powered off, the performance check shall be repeated before the DMD-48 is used in casework again.

5.6.1.2.1 The performance check shall be conducted using the DMD-48 calibration rod.

5.6.2 Calibration Check Procedure

5.6.2.1 Power on the DMD-48.

5.6.2.2 Using the attached handle, slide the rear movable plate until it is flush with the front plate.

5.6.2.3 Zero the DMD-48 by pressing the “X₀” button.

5.6.2.4 Remove the end caps from the 24” calibration rod and place it in the center of the unit, with one end against the front plate.

5.6.2.5 Slide the rear movable plate until it contacts the end of the calibration rod.

5.6.2.6 Record the length in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for the DMD-48 shall be +/- 0.03 inch.

5.6.3 Performance Check Procedure

5.6.3.1 Power on the DMD-48.

5.6.3.2 Using the attached handle, slide the rear movable plate until it is flush with the front plate.

5.6.3.3 Zero the DMD-48 by pressing the “X₀” button.

5.6.3.4 Remove the end caps from the 24” calibration rod and place it in the center of the unit, with one end against the front plate.

5.6.3.5 Slide the rear movable plate until it contacts the end of the calibration rod.

5.6.3.6 The tolerance for this length shall be +/- 0.03 inch. If the measured length falls within this tolerance range, the successful performance check shall be recorded in Forensic Advantage (FA).

- 5.6.4** In the event that a performance check fails, a calibration check shall be performed by the Section EM or his/her designee before the DMD-48 may be used in casework. If this calibration check should also fail, the DMD-48 shall be removed from casework as outlined in 5.1.5.

5.7 Measurement Tapes

5.7.1 Maintenance

- 5.7.1.1** Each measurement tape shall be calibration checked annually by the Section EM or his/her designee.

5.7.2 Calibration Check Procedure

- 5.7.2.1** Extend the measurement tape to more than 24 inches.
- 5.7.2.2** Compare each measurement tape directly with the 36 inch NIST-traceable ruler at 6 and 24 inches.
- 5.7.2.3** Record the lengths in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for each measurement tape shall be +/- 1/16 inch.

5.8 Calipers

5.8.1 Maintenance

- 5.8.1.1** Each caliper shall be calibrated annually by an outside vendor.
- 5.8.1.1.1** The original record of this maintenance shall be maintained by the Section Document Custodian or his/her designee. A copy of the record may be placed in the pertinent instrument logbook.
- 5.8.1.2** Each caliper shall be calibration checked monthly by the Section EM or his/her designee.

5.8.2 Calibration Check Procedure

- 5.8.2.1** Close the jaws of the caliper and verify that the caliper reads zero.
- 5.8.2.2** Using the gage blocks, open the jaws of the caliper and measure the widths of the 0.500" and 1.000" blocks.
- 5.8.2.2.1** Use the entire surface of the jaws, being careful to hold the caliper level or the reading may fluctuate.
- 5.8.2.3** Record the lengths in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for each caliper shall be +/- 0.004 inch.

5.9 Micrometers

5.9.1 Maintenance

5.9.1.1 Each micrometer shall be calibrated annually by an outside vendor.

5.9.1.1.1 The original record of this maintenance shall be maintained by the Section Document Custodian or his/her designee. A copy of the record may be placed in the pertinent instrument logbook.

5.9.1.2 Each micrometer shall be calibration checked monthly by the Section EM or his/her designee.

5.9.2 Calibration Check Procedure

5.9.2.1 Close the jaws of the micrometer and verify that the micrometer reads zero.

5.9.2.2 Using the gage blocks, open the jaws of the micrometer and measure the widths of the 0.500" and 1.000" blocks.

5.9.2.2.1 Hold the micrometer level or the reading may fluctuate.

5.9.2.3 Record the lengths in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for each micrometer shall be +/- 0.004 inch.

5.10 Chronograph (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)

5.10.1 Maintenance

5.10.1.1 The chronograph shall be calibration checked prior to being used in casework by the Forensic Scientist who will use it.

5.10.1.1.1 The calibration check shall be conducted using U.S. Springfield Armory, caliber 22 Long Rifle, bolt action rifle, serial number 666A, Model M2, Firearm Reference Collection #FA3280 and Federal Gold Medal Target, caliber 22 Long Rifle, 40 grain solid lead bullet ammunition, Lot #3AV141.

5.10.2 Calibration Check Procedure

5.10.2.1 The calibration check procedure is outlined in the Technical Procedure for Firearm Examination.

5.11 Sound Meter (located in the Raleigh Laboratory)

5.11.1 Maintenance

5.11.1.1 The sound meter shall be calibrated prior to being used in casework by the Forensic Scientist who will use it.

5.11.1.1.1 The calibration shall be conducted using U.S. Springfield Armory, caliber 22 Long Rifle, bolt action rifle, serial number 666A, Model

M2, Firearm Reference Collection #FA3280 and Federal Gold Medal Target, caliber 22 Long Rifle, 40 grain solid lead bullet ammunition, Lot #3AV141.

5.11.2 Calibration Procedure

5.11.2.1 The calibration procedure is outlined in the Technical Procedure for Firearm Examination.

5.12 Reference Standards

5.12.1 Maintenance

5.12.1.1 The gage blocks, 10 g and 1000 g reference weights, the stage micrometer, DMD-48 calibration rod, NIST-traceable rulers, and Hott-Rod™ rods shall be calibrated every five (5) years by an outside vendor. The resultant calibration documentation shall be maintained by the Section Document Custodian.

5.12.1.2 The NIST QC cartridge case shall be maintained with the reference standards, but does not require calibration.

5.12.1.3 The designated land impression of each reference bullet used for performance checking the comparison microscopes shall be measured by the Section EM or his/her designee immediately following the annual recalibration of the comparison microscopes. The width shall be documented in the appropriate logbook and the tolerance shall be +/- .005 inch.

5.12.1.4 Each reference bullet used for performance checking the balances shall be weighed by the Section EM or his/her designee immediately following the annual certification of the balances. The weight shall be documented in the appropriate logbook and the tolerance shall be +/- 1 grain.

6.0 Limitations – N/A

7.0 Safety – N/A

8.0 References

Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners. *Procedures Manual*. 2001.

9.0 Records

- Calibration Logbooks

10.0 Attachments – N/A

Revision History		
Effective Date	Version Number	Reason
09/17/2012	1	Original Document
10/17/2012	2	Added a sentence to the end of 5.2.1.5, 5.4.1.3, and 5.6.1.2 to clarify that performance checks shall be conducted after a power shut down; added comma in 5.2.3.7; changed grains to grain in 5.4.2.1.5.
02/15/2013	3	Removed Raleigh from the header; 3.0 – corrected definition of caliper; 4.0 – specified which instruments are located in the Raleigh Laboratory, removed lead caliper and lead micrometer checks, and added gage blocks; 5.1.4.1 – added log sheet; 5.2.1.2.1 – clarified maintenance of calibration records; 5.2.1.5.1.1 – added Raleigh Laboratory; 5.4.1.1.1 – clarified maintenance of calibration records; 5.4.2.2 – added language in parentheses; 5.5.1.1 – added Raleigh Laboratory; added 5.8.1.1.1; 5.8.2.2 – replaced caliper reference standard with gage blocks; added 5.9.1.1.1; 5.9.2.2 – replaced micrometer reference standard with gage blocks; 5.10 – added language in parentheses; 5.11 – added language in parentheses; 5.12.1.1 – replaced caliper and micrometer reference standards with gage blocks
05/10/2013	4	5.6.2.6 and 5.6.3.6 – changed tolerance from 0.01 to 0.03 inch