

Terms of Reference

for the

Quality Standards Specialist Group

Status

1 The Quality Standards Specialist Group (hereafter referred to as the “Specialist Group”) is a Standing Specialist Group established to advise the Forensic Science Regulator (“the Regulator”) and the Forensic Science Advisory Council (“the Council”) on matters within its remit.

Remit

2 The Specialist Group will support the Regulator and the Council by providing advice on all matters related to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of scientific quality standards within the remit of the Regulator. The Specialist Group will:

- i). Review the processes employed by the Regulator to develop and implement quality standards.
- ii). Review the format for quality standards prepared by the Regulator.
- iii). Receive, in draft, standards developed by other specialist groups to ensure appropriate processes have been followed and that the standards are consistent in format and approach.
- iv). Support the work of other specialist groups by providing advice and assistance with regard to the production of standards.
- v). Advise on arrangements for validation and testing of processes, techniques or equipment to ensure the prescribed regimes are effective and proportionate.
- vi). Oversee the processes for monitoring and enforcing quality standards, including relationships with other bodies, within forensic science.
- vii). Propose means of remedying any shortcomings, distinguishing between measures which fall within the remit of the Regulator and those which do not.
- viii). On request from the Regulator, review validation exercises and advise as to the adequacy of the validation.
- ix). Make such other recommendations as appear appropriate.
- x). Report serious matters, possible miscarriages to the minister as soon as they are apparent and the actions to remedy?

3. The Specialist Group will, following a request from the Regulator develop standards, processes or policies for consideration by the Council and Regulator.

Composition

4. The following organisations will be invited to nominate suitable persons to membership of the Specialist Group:

United Kingdom Accreditation Service

British Standards Institute

Skills for Justice

NPIA Custodian Management Unit

NPIA Forensic Science Unit

Forensic Science Service of Northern Ireland

Scottish Police Services Authority

Forensic Science Suppliers

The Forensic Science Service Ltd

LGC Forensics Ltd

5. The nominations of the forensic science suppliers will be reviewed annually to ensure representation from the two largest suppliers plus three other significant supplier organisations.

6. The Chair, Deputy Chair and members of the Specialist Group will be appointed by the Regulator, with the approval of the Council.

7. The Regulator may at the request of, or following consultation with, the Chair of the Specialist Group, add to the membership of the Specialist Group or invite other individuals to serve on the Specialist Group for limited periods of time where additional skills, knowledge or experience are required.

Operation

8. The Specialist Group will operate in accordance with a detailed plan presented by the Chair and approved by the Regulator, who will be advised by the Council.

9. The Specialist Group will conduct its business out of committee as far as possible, but will meet as and when required in order to discharge its remit.

10. In the interests of public accountability, the Specialist Group will carry out its work as openly as possible, within the terms of the Code of Practice on Access to Government Information, subject to any necessary confidentiality requirements and any conditions set by Ministers or agreed by the Regulator.

11. No budget is delegated to the Specialist Group but such assistance as is reasonably required to enable the Specialist Group to undertake its duties will be provided, within available resources.

12. Membership of the Specialist Group is unremunerated. The Regulator may approve repayment of travel and subsistence costs necessarily incurred on Specialist Group business by any members who are unable to obtain reimbursement from their employers. Repayment will only be made where the Regulator has specifically agreed, in writing and in advance of the expenditure, to entertain claims from a named individual under this provision.

13. Where the business of the Specialist Group gives rise to the need for expenditure from the Regulator's budget (including any claims under paragraph 11 above), the Regulator's written approval must be obtained in advance of any commitment to the expenditure.

14. The Chair of the Specialist Group may establish such other procedures as s/he considers appropriate for the operation of the Specialist Group, providing that these are not inconsistent with the above.

Working Groups

15. The Specialist Group may, with the approval of the Regulator, establish such working groups as it considers necessary for the efficient and effective conduct of its business. Such working groups will be constituted with clear written terms of reference and will report to the Specialist Group.

Conduct

16. Members of the Specialist Group are required to observe the Seven Principles of Public Life endorsed by the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life. Each member must at all times act in good faith and observe the highest standards of impartiality, integrity and objectivity in relation to the conduct of the Specialist Group's business.

17. Any Specialist Group member has the right to bring to the attention of the Regulator any matter, which he or she believes raises important issues relating to his or her duties as a member. In such cases the member should, before approaching the Regulator, raise their concerns with the Specialist Group Chair to establish whether they might be resolved within the Specialist Group.

Confidentiality

18. In accepting appointment to the Specialist Group, members are required to accept that they will not disclose any information or documents presented to the Specialist Group without the approval of the Regulator. This includes any documents marked with any GPMS security classification (including RESTRICTED) and the content of any discussions relating to such information. Members undertake not to make copies of any such documents,

and to follow the advice provided by the Regulator and FSRU about the handling of such documents.

FSRU

14 January 2007