

# **Forensic Science Regulator**

## **Terms of Reference**

**Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group  
(FQSSG)**

**FSR-T-C06**

**Issue 4**

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Purpose

This document sets out the terms of reference for the Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG)

### 1.2 Implementation

The terms of reference set out in this document became effective on the date of publication.

### 1.3 Modification

1.3.1 This is the fourth version of the terms of reference for the FQSSG and is now identified as FSR-T-C06. The document has been reformatted to meet the Regulator's obligations under The Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018.

## 2. Terms of Reference

### 2.1 Status

2.1.1 The Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG) (hereafter referred to as the "Specialist Group") is an ad hoc specialist group established to advise the Forensic Science Regulator ("the Regulator"), the Forensic Science Advisory Council ('the Council') and other delivery partners (NPCC, and CPS), on matters within its remit.

### 2.2 Remit

2.2.1 The Specialist Group will support the Regulator and the Council with recommendations on the agreed option for quality standards for fingerprint<sup>1</sup> examinations and followed by ongoing assessment and advice on all matters related to the preparation, implementation and monitoring of fingerprint quality standards within the remit of the Regulator. The Specialist Group will:

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<sup>1</sup> Includes fingermark and fingerprint activities.

- a. Define the scope to be included in the fingerprint quality standard, with options for later extension of the scope.
- b. Recommend what best achieves quality standards in the delivery of fingerprint technology and expertise to the criminal justice system<sup>2</sup>.
- c. Propose means of remedying any shortcomings, distinguishing between measures which fall within the remit of the Regulator and those which do not.
- d. Make such other recommendations as appear appropriate.

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

## 2.3 **Composition**

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

- a. Academia (University of Lausanne)
- b. Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL)
- c. Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
- d. Home Office Biometrics (HOB)
- e. National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC)
- f. Scottish Police Authority (SPA)
- g. The Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences (CSFS)
- h. United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)
- i. Independent Fingerprint Expert (non-policing)

2.3.2 [The College of Policing (CoP) will have observer status on the group and Police Service of Northern Ireland will be consulted and copied papers where appropriate]

2.3.3 Appendix 1 contains additional information on the nomination requirements.

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<sup>2</sup> 'Expertise' covers the giving of valid opinion evidence by fingerprint examiners in reports, witness statements and evidence in court.

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

2.3.5 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.

## **2.4 Operation**

2.4.1 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.

2.4.2 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.

2.4.3 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.

2.4.4 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.

2.4.5 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.

2.4.6 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.

2.4.7 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.

## **2.5 Working Groups**

2.5.1 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.

2.5.2 Appendix 2 sets out the terms for the scientific reference group for fingerprint visualisation, as an example of the format to be used for other areas of fingerprint examination.

## **2.6 Conduct**

2.6.1 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.

2.6.2 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.

## **2.7 Confidentiality**

2.7.1 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 Official Sensitive) and the content of any discussions relating to such information. Members undertake not to make copies of any such documents, and to follow

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

## **2.8 Specialist Group and GDPR**

2.8.1 The contact details that members provide will be used by the Regulator or the Regulator's representatives and shared amongst the membership of the group to facilitate a member's involvement in the activities of the group as the Regulator deems appropriate. Typically, this would mean that a member's email address would be visible to the group to allow for debate within the group.

2.8.2 Any reference made to a member in published records of meetings will be by initials and organisation where that is necessary for clarity of the record.

2.8.3 A group member's contact details will not be shared beyond the group without their express permission.

2.8.4 Details of how the Regulator uses a member's personal information can be found in the Regulator's personal information charter which can be found at:  
[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forensic-science-regulator/about/personal-information-charter](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forensic-science-regulator/about/personal-information-charter)

## **3. Review**

3.1.1 This document is subject to review at regular intervals.

If you have any comments please send them to the address or e-mail set out on the Regulator's Internet site at URL:

[www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forensic-science-regulator](http://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/forensic-science-regulator)

## Appendix 1

Area of expertise	Person description	Nominating authority
Academia	A respected renowned expert and author in the field of fingerprint examination with particular emphasis on research and development.	University of Lausanne
Accreditation	Forensic accreditation specialist or nominee providing assessment to the requirements of ISO17025 and the FSR Codes.	United Kingdom Accreditation Service
Automated fingerprint Identification system (AFIS)	Specialist or nominee providing the AFIS service to meet end-user (CJS) legal and standards requirements, including the monitoring of performance for steady state and application changes to the AFIS Service delivery standards.	Home Office Biometrics
Criminal Justice System E&W	A lawyer with experience of prosecuting, or managing the prosecution of, cases in which forensic science has been at issue.	Crown Prosecution Service
Fingerprint profession	A specialist who has achieved eminence in the field of fingerprint examination with particular emphasis on promoting research, development, good practice and continuing professional development training.	Chartered Society of Forensic Science
Fingermark Examination	Senior fingerprint specialist who is respected as an authority in the fields of friction ridge detail visualisation and/or comparison within the CJS in England and Wales.	Greater Manchester Police; Metropolitan Police Service; West Midlands Police; West York/Humber; East Midlands.



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		Fingerprint Associates Limited
Scotland	A senior specialist with significant knowledge of the use of fingerprint evidence within the CJS in Scotland.	Scottish Police Authority
Visualisation (Enhancement)	A specialist who has achieved eminence in the practice of fingermark visualisation with particular emphasis on enhancement techniques, research and maintenance of the fingermark visualisation manual (FVM).	Defence Science Technology Laboratory

## Appendix 2

### 4. Scientific Reference Group – Fingerprint Visualisation

- 4.1.1 The aim of the Forensic Science Regulator is to ensure that all forensic science provided to the criminal justice system is of the required level of quality in line with the Codes of Practice and Conduct. To support the achievement of this and accreditation to relevant scientific standards, particularly BS/EN ISO 17025, the Forensic Science Regulator has published an Appendix to the Codes (FSR-C-127 Fingerprint Visualisation/Image Capture). This Appendix draws on the knowledge base and guidance set out in the CAST<sup>3</sup> Fingerprint Visualisation Manual (January 2014).
- 4.1.2 To provide organisations seeking to work to the Codes of Practice and Conduct and specifically the Appendix, FSR-C-127 a Scientific Reference Group will be established under the Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG). The purpose of this group will be:-
- a. To provide advice and guidance on the scientific aspects of the visualisation of the finger marks to organisations seeking to achieve accreditation.
  - b. To provide advice to the Forensic Science Regulator on any risks to the criminal justice system or any issues that arise during the accreditation process for the delivery of fingerprint visualisation examinations.
- 4.1.3 The FQSSG Scientific Reference Group will be chaired by a member of the Forensic Science Regulation staff and will have representation from Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL) and United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) and a provider of fingerprint visualisation services as core members and other ad hoc members as decided by the Chair.

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<sup>3</sup> Centre for Applied Science and Technology (CAST) now formally merged with Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL)

- 4.1.4 Referrals to the FQSSG Scientific Reference Group can be made by any party involved in the delivery of fingerprint visualisation and the accreditation of these services.
- 4.1.5 The Group is not intended to duplicate or replace existing accreditation processes or bodies and where scientific issues are raised in the course of the assessment process it is expected that every effort will have been made to resolve these before referral to the FQSSG Scientific Reference Group. The Group will provide scientific advice only and it will not arbitrate, set policy or be a decision maker in the process.

September 2020

Published by:

The Forensic Science Regulator

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