



Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG)

Note of the meeting held on 3 October 2017 at 5 St Phillips Place, Colmore Row, Birmingham.

1.0 Welcome, Introduction and Apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed all to the meeting. A full list of attendees and apologies is provided at Annex A.

2.0 Minutes of the last FQSSG meeting on 29 June 2017.

2.1 The previous FQSSG minutes were approved as an accurate reflection of the discussion held, subject to minor amendments, and the Secretariat was asked to publish them.

Action 1: The Secretariat to publish the minutes of the FQSSG meeting held on 29 June 2017 on GOV.UK.

3.0 Actions and Matters Arising

3.1 The following matters arising from the previous FQSSG meeting were discussed:

3.2 *Action 3: Chair to write a letter to the Regulator expressing the FQSSG's concerns in relation to fingerprint bureaux meeting the October 2018 deadline for gaining accreditation. The Forensic Science Regulator (the 'Regulator') had discussed the outcomes of the Regulator's fingerprint accreditation workshop with Rachel Swann, NPCC. Members heard that some practitioners were not confident of meeting the accreditation deadline, and discussed that the view of senior managers within the fingerprint community may not be reflective of practitioners, and this needs to be carefully considered. It was clear at the fingerprint workshop that practitioner understanding of the requirements varied between organisations. The Regulator would consult with the National Police Chiefs Council (NPCC) Fingerprint portfolio lead to combine the views of the FQSSG with other stakeholders on the current situation. Members made the following points in regard to accreditation:*

- *skilled and experienced resources were required to help organisations;*
- *the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) had found instances of a lack of quality knowledge cross over to fingerprints during multiple visits to organisations;*

- *failure to gain a recommendation for accreditation first time round can lead to increased costs for providers if additional validation or re-examination was required;*
- *scientific and policing organisations should have established and have consistent procedures in place for fingerprint examination prior to assessment;*
- *streamlined forensic reports could lead to a decreased emphasis on quality standards in favour of a fast turn-around; and*
- *there was limited scientific literature in this field to support practitioners unsure of best practice.*

Action 2: The Regulator to share the feedback for fingerprint bureaux meeting the October 2018 accreditation deadline with the NPCC portfolio lead on fingerprints

3.3 All other actions from the previous meeting were either complete or were included as agenda items in the current meeting.

4.0 Fingerprint Appendices to the Code of Practice and Conduct

4.1 The FQSSG heard that new fingerprint appendices to the Regulator's Code of Practice and Conduct were published in August 2017¹. Members heard that the Forensic Science Regulation Unit (FSRU) had received an inquiry from a stakeholder concerning the provision of feedback to other stakeholders in the supply chain. It was confirmed that the expectation was that forensic units would have established procedures for providing feedback (e.g. on the quality of an image) to other organisations, and that feedback they provided would be logged in their internal systems. The group discussed that forensic units would only be in a position to request, rather than demand, new or higher quality information as a part of this feedback.

5.0 UKAS

5.1 Members heard that currently, none of the UK police force fingerprint bureaux held accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025, which was required by October 2018 in the Regulator's Code of Practice and Conduct. As such, a consistent approach to the UKAS assessments in this context had yet to be established. The group was provided with a document for bureaux outlining the timeline of such assessments. Each fingerprint bureaux had been assigned an assessment slot, and the document outlined the milestones in the assessment process. The slots had been assigned based on information provided by quality managers to the NPCC finger print landscape report to the NPCC performance and standards group that was available at the time.

¹ Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/forensic-science-providers-codes-of-practice-and-conduct>

5.2 One FQSSG member highlighted that their organisation had not, to their knowledge, been assigned an assessment slot in this manner. The UKAS representative agreed to investigate this.

Action 3: UKAS to ensure all fingerprint bureaux have been assigned UKAS assessment slot.

5.3 It was confirmed that UKAS would not be conducting pre-assessments as a part of this process, but would offer bureaux feedback on the documents that were provided in advance of the assessment. UKAS would not conduct assessments if the necessary information was not provided beforehand as set out in the milestone document.

5.4 Members heard that the assessment teams for fingerprint comparison were composed of individuals with different expertise, based on the specific needs of the field. The Regulator highlighted concerns from quality managers that large teams such as these were more expensive. However, it was countered that given the existing expertise available, such teams were the best way of ensuring a consistent and high quality assessment process. In addition, it was confirmed that the cost of assessment for each fingerprint bureau would be the same, regardless of their assigned assessment slot, which was of particular relevance as organisations assessed earlier in the process may be visited by larger teams whilst assessors gained experience.

5.5 The group was informed that UKAS was observing a basic level of validation across organisations, including acute deficiencies in measuring success. Members heard the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) had conducted several validation studies in relation to fingerprint comparison, and these could be useful for other organisations. The group agreed a coherent approach was required across the field, and the FQSSG had role to play in this.

6.0 NPCC

6.1 Members heard that the NPCC Fingerprint Board had met recently and discussed a variety of topics, including voluntary attendees, the Transforming Forensics Programme, the Home Office Biometrics (HOB) programme and ground truth databases.

6.2 The group was informed new guidance would be issued on fentanyl² analysis, and the circumstances in which such analysis can be conducted, particularly in relation to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff conducting the analysis. The Regulator highlighted that the American College of Toxicology had issued a document on fentanyl, and the Regulator would

² Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opiate, which along with its analogues has led to a significant number of deaths and an urgent public health response. It is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and is a licensed medicine used to treat severe and terminal pain, but is also available on the illicit market. It is controlled as a Class A drug under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971.

forward this to the East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU) representative.

Action 4: The Regulator to forward guidance on fentanyl from the American College of Toxicology to the EMSOU representative.

7.0 HOB

7.1 Members were updated on the work of the HOB programme, including projects on the fingerprint matcher, face matcher for custody images, latent finger mark searching capability and the IDENT1 training environment.

7.2 In relation to the IDENT1 training environment, FQSSG members were asked for feedback on how to organise training for fingerprint practitioners moving forward. West Yorkshire Police, agreed to engage with the HOB programme on this issue.

Action 5: Chair Fingerprint network from West Yorkshire Police to discuss future fingerprint training provision with Graham Camm.

8.0 Transforming Forensics

8.1 The group was provided with an update on the Transforming Forensics programme, a programme designed to facilitate a national approach to forensic science delivery. The programme had progressed through the initial stage and was now focused on building a team and establishing a business case. It was expected there would be significant engagement with the HOB programme. Topics upon which the group were updated included stakeholder engagement, resourcing, work packages, proof of concept work streams, key risks and key milestones.

9.0 American Association for the Advancement of Science 2017 report

9.1 Members were provided with a copy of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) 2017 report *Forensic Science Assessments – A Quality and Gap Analysis – Latent Fingerprint Examination*³. The Regulator opined that it was a good review of the field.

9.2 A section of the report referred to introducing known-source research samples into the routine flow of casework, so that examiners did not know their performance was being studied. It was suggested the HOB programme may want to incorporate the regular blind testing capability into its platform.

Action 6: The Regulator to discuss with the transforming forensic fingerprint lead the potential for incorporating known-source samples into the HOB programme.

³ Available from <https://www.aaas.org/report/latent-fingerprint-examination>.

9.3 The Regulator agreed with the report's authors that the field should move away from using the term 'identification', as it implies a degree of certainty and consistency in approach, which is not always the case. The group was asked to feedback with alternative terms that could be used.

9.4 The group discussed Streamlined Forensic Reports (SFRs), and it was suggested that the use of the term 'identification' within them was potentially misleading

Action 7: FQSSG members to feedback to the Regulator justification for the use of the term 'identification' and suggest possible alternatives by the end of October.

Action 8: The Regulator to discuss categorical identifications within SFRs with the FSRU and national SFR leads.

10.0 FQSSG Work Plan

10.1 The group was presented with an updated work plan, based on the discussion at the previous FQSSG meeting. Topics discussed included technical assessor guidance and the Automatic Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS).

10.2 Members discussed fingermark interpretation issues, and it was suggested that there was a wealth of data in INDENT1 that could be used for research in this area. It was also queried whether funding was available for a PhD project in this topic.

Action 9: FSRU fingerprint lead to discuss research opportunities concerning finger mark interpretation with the University of Lausanne representative.

10.3 Crime Scene Investigation (CSI) fingermark enhancement was discussed, including how the FQSSG could provide advice in this area. It was decided that the NPCC CSI expert network group should be contacted in regards to this.

Action 10: FSRU fingerprint lead and the Chair to liaise with the chair of the NPCC CSI expert network.

Action 11: FSRU fingerprint lead to update the FQSSG work plan based on the discussions at this meeting.

11.0 Centre for Applied Technology

11.1 The group were provided with an update on the work of the Centre for Applied Technology (CAST). Topics discussed included the fingerprint source book, validation data, a digital source book and the internal CAST restructure.

12.0 European Network of Forensic Science Institutes (ENFSI)

- 12.1 The group heard that workshops on identification had been run by ENSFI, and it was suggested that something similar would be useful in the UK.
- 12.2 The Monopoly Programme was discussed, and the group heard that the best practice manual would be updated later this year.
- 12.3 New projects would be starting on best practice guidance for fingerprint analysis during CSI and on a European-wide forensics training scheme.

13.0 AOB

Accreditation

- 13.1 The group heard that the EMSOU had received two visits by UKAS in regards to gaining accreditation for the fingerprint bureau, and shared some lessons learned with the group.

College of Policing

- 13.2 The College of Policing had run fingerprint training courses and conducted an initial review of learning standards.

Dates of future meetings

- 13.3 It was agreed meetings would continue at 3 month intervals. West Yorkshire Police and UKAS agreed to host future meetings. The next meeting of the FQSSG was scheduled for the 8th February, with the Metropolitan Police Service hosting.

Action 12: Secretariat to plan three FQSSG meetings at the Home Office, West York Police and UKAS.

Annex A

Organisation Representatives Present:

Scottish Police Authority (SPA) - Chair
Forensic Science Regulator (FSR)
Home Office - CAST
Crown Prosecution Service (CPS)
College of Policing (CoP)
West Yorkshire Police (WYP)
Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences (CSFS)
Home Office - FSRU
Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)
UK Accreditation Service (UKAS)
East Midlands Special Operations Unit (EMSOU)
Home Office - Science Secretariat

Apologies:

NPCC fingerprint enhancement laboratory chair
Greater Manchester Police (GMP)
Home Office – Biometric Programme (HOB)
University of Lausanne