

**Quality Standards Specialist Group (QSSG)**

**Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2019  
Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF**

**1. Opening and welcome**

1.1 The Chair, the Forensic Science Regulator (the 'Regulator'), welcomed all to the meeting. See Annex A for a list of representatives present.

**2. Minutes of previous meeting, actions and matters arising**

2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting held on 26 March 2019 had been approved by members prior to the meeting and were published on the [GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk) website.

2.2 Action 1: FSRU to set up a working group to update the validation guidance. This action is currently in progress.

2.3 Action 2: FSRU to examine Data Integrity audit cases that had been provided to FSRU by Forensic Science Providers (FSP) to see if a lesson learnt document could be developed. This action would be discussed later in the meeting as part of item 4 of the agenda.

2.4 Action 3: NCA representative to produce a proposal for the Digital Forensics Specialist Group to review to see if setting milestones and/or a minimum scope for digital forensic activity at the scene would allow prioritisation. This action has been completed.

2.5 Action 4: QSSG members to send any further comments on the Codes to the FSRU as soon as possible. This action has been completed.

2.6 Action 5: Eurofins Forensic Services representative to supply examples to be considered for inclusion in the expert report guidance. This action was still in progress.

2.7 All other actions were complete.

**3. Cyber security**

3.1 Due to the recent cyber-attack on Eurofins Scientific, which provides forensic and scientific services to a range of UK Law Enforcement agencies, it was decided the information and IT security within the Regulator's Codes should be reviewed. It was confirmed the National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) was reviewing IT security information within the Codes and suggesting what should be added or changed. Members views were sought on this proposal. Members felt IT security was constantly changing, and information within the codes could become outdated. It was suggested adding links within the codes to other references that contained updated IT security information.

Action 1: The Regulator and FSRU to circulate proposed guidance on IT security for QSSG members comments and feedback.

Action 2: QSSG members to send any further comments on the Codes to the FSRU as soon as possible.

#### **4. Audit lessons learnt- Data Audit findings**

4.1 A lessons learnt document had been developed using data integrity audit cases which had been provided by Forensic Science Providers (FSPs) to the FSRU. The lessons learnt document captured the common issues identified within the data integrity audit cases and included the critical control point process. The QSSG agreed the document would be useful and helpful to the forensic community.

4.2 The QSSG was asked for comments on the draft lessons learnt document. A member suggested it would be useful under the summary of general audit findings, to structure the findings as a learning points check list which could be more beneficial to the reader.

Action 3: FSRU to amend some of the wording under summary of general audit findings.

4.3 A member queried if all the information within the lessons learnt would be included in the next version of the Regulator's Codes (version 5). It was explained information concerning manipulation of data would be incorporated in version 5 of the codes.

#### **5. Risks around recent entrants failing to appreciate the requirements of the CJS**

5.1 The Regulator presented this item. There had been several issues that had arisen within the forensic science community. It was agreed some of these issues were as a result of new organisations moving into forensic science community from other sectors. A concern was raised that some of the new entrants did not fully understand the requirements of working in the criminal justice system (CJS). For example, secured transport for transporting evidence, and understanding the legal obligations of expert witnesses. The QSSG views were sought on how to address this issue.

5.2 A member suggested adding core requirements as an appendix to the Codes, which could ensure new entrants were aware of their responsibilities to the CJS before they apply for accreditation. It was explained a Legal Obligations document had already been produced specially for this purpose. Another suggestion was creating a webinar/video that informs individuals of their responsibilities within the FSPs and the CJS. The webinar could feature the Regulator, Judges, representatives from policing, and the CPS. Case examples could also be included into the webinar, and also highlighting the consequences for the individual or organisation if things were not done correctly. Whistleblowing was also considered as important topic and should also be included in the webinar.

Action 4: FSRU to investigate producing a webinar/video that informs individuals of the FSP's and CPS processes.

## **6. Update on statutory powers**

6.1 The members were informed this was currently in progress, and the Home Office was committed to ensuring the Regulator is granted statutory powers as soon as possible.

## **7. Letter to the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee**

7.1 The house of Lords Science and Technology Committee report was published in June 2019, and the report made a number of recommendations for the Forensic Science Regulator. The Regulator had provided a response to two recommendations directed specifically at the Regulator in the report.

7.2 The response from the Regulator was shared with the QSSG and discussed. The response will be published by the Lords' Committee in due course.

## **8. Gait analysis**

8.1 The QSSG were presented with a draft version of the code of practice for forensic gait analysis. The code of practice for forensic gait analysis was written by The Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences Forensic Gait Analysis Working Group in collaboration with the College of Podiatry. The QSSG were asked if they had any comments on the document. The Regulator expressed her thanks to the Chartered Society of Forensic Science, and to everyone else involved for their work on the document. The QSSG was supportive of the document and had no further comments to add.

## **9. Assurance requirements for batches of consumables used in the collection processing and storage of DNA samples**

9.1 The Transforming Forensics representative sought clarification from the QSSG on how assurance can be provided to the end-users that batches of DNA consumables were fit for purpose. It was explained with the expansion of the application of ISO 17020/17025 standards, and accreditation to new areas of forensic science beyond the traditional DNA testing laboratory, the issue of how end-users are required to demonstrate batches of DNA consumables are fit for purpose continues to be raised. During pre-assessment visits for accreditation, it was queried how end users were required to demonstrate the batches of DNA consumables used were fit purpose. The FSR-G 208: The Control and Avoidance of Contamination in Laboratory Activities involving DNA Evidence Recovery and Analysis specifically addressed this. The standard confirmed if certain requirements were met, that batch testing of 'human DNA free' consumables that were suitable for post- production treatment does not have to be conducted by end users.

9.2 The standard implies the post-production treatment process utilised by the provider has been independently assessed and certified as compliant with BS PAS 377:2012 *Specification for consumables used in the collection, preservation and processing of material for forensic analysis*, and/or ISO 18385:2016 *Minimizing the risk of human DNA contamination in products used to collect, store and analyse biological material for forensic purposes*. It was also explained for each batch, a certificate confirming the batch has passed the required testing is provided and details of the test results shall be made available to the end users.

9.3 This issue was discussed by the QSSG. The Regulator suggested that FSP's and policing could include a requirement within their procurement to commission an audit of compliance against the suppliers of DNA consumables against standard ISO 18385. The audit would be completed by an independent expert, who would then provide a report of their findings to the FSP's and policing. The QSSG agreed this was a sensible proposal.

**Action 5: Forensic Science Northern Ireland representative to discuss this issue with the AFSP, and then to feedback to the Transforming Forensics representative.**

## **10. AOB**

10.1 A member sought clarification from the QSSG on Digital Media Investigators (DMI's) and the digital forensic activity they perform in their vans. This included acquisition and mobile phone examination. It was queried if the standard for performing these activities in the van would be covered under the ISO 17025, or ISO 17020 scope. It was explained if a mobile phone was being examined in the DMI's van this would be covered under 17025. If a DMI had attended an incident scene and decided what items should be examined and completes this examination in the van this would be covered under 17020.

10.2 It was confirmed a working group would be set up that would focus on digital forensics activities at crime scenes.

Action 6: FSRU to set up a working group that will look at digital forensics activities at crime scenes.

## **11. Date of the next meeting**

11.1 The date of the next meeting was 13 November 2019.

## **Annex A**

### **Representatives present from:**

- Forensic Science Regulator (chair)
- Forensic Science Regulation Unit
- NPCC Portfolio
- Expert Witness Institute
- Forensic Science Northern Ireland
- The Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences
- HO Science Secretariat
- Transforming Forensics
- United Kingdom Accreditation Service
- Key Forensic Services
- Legal Aid Agency
- Metropolitan Police Service
- Cambridgeshire Constabulary
- National Crime Agency - Forensic Services Dept
- Defence Science and Technology Laboratory
- National Quality Managers' Group
- Eurofins Forensic Services

### **Apologies from:**

- Crown Prosecution Service
- The Chartered Society of Forensic Sciences
- National Fire Chiefs Council
- Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services
- Orchid Cellmark Ltd
- Glaisyers Solicitors Birmingham
- College of Policing
- Manchester Coroner's Office
- BSI group
- Criminal Bar Association