



Forensic Science Regulator

Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group

Note of the meeting held on 13 December 2023 online via video conference

1. Welcome, and Introduction

- 1.1. The Chair welcomed all the members a meeting of the Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG).

2. Handover from previous FQSSG Chair

- 2.1. Due to retirement, the previous Chair of the FQSSG informed the group they would be standing down, a new Chair had been appointed by the Forensic Science Regulator.
- 2.2. It was noted by the former Chair that it had been a long time since the FQSSG had met, noting new membership on the group. The former Chair outlined the historical context of the FQSSG and shared words of thanks to the Regulator and officials in the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator. The former chair thanked the members of the FQSSG for the work and expertise they had provided before formally handing over Chairmanship.

3. Introduction to workplan, purpose and discussion

- 3.1. Members introduced themselves. A list of attendees by organisation is available at Annex A.
- 3.2. A draft terms of reference had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. Members reviewed the terms of reference, and it was acknowledged that the membership of the FQSSG should be updated. This would be discussed at

Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes

agenda item 4. Subject to updates to the membership, the terms of reference were agreed with no further comments.

- 3.3. The representative from the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator provided an overview of the workplan to the FQSSG for discussion. The key items were:
- Standards: Defining scope of accreditation in line with Regulator's directive for scope
 - AFIS /Searching algorithm
 - Bureau/CSI tools development and implementation
 - Interpretation Issues: Support the Regulator in development of evaluative Interpretation guidance and provision of support, where applicable, to the NFFSB in development of a position paper on community led approach to probabilistic reporting.
- 3.4. The group discussed and agreed that while it would be of benefit to be sighted on any updates, as an advisory group for the Regulator, providing comment on the fingerprint visualisation manual would not be applicable to the FQSSG.
- ACTION 1:** Representative for the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator to update the FQSSG workplan and include additional detail.
- 3.5. Ahead of the meeting attendees were provided a briefing note by the Regulator. The Chair summarised these documents to the members of the FQSSG for discussion.
- 3.6. It was agreed by members of the FQSSG that there was a need to identify the ask of the Regulator to the community for assurance in the friction ridge comparison process and from that identify the commonalities between the practitioner community and the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS). The group discussed the need to understand the views across the community and the variabilities being observed.
- 3.7. The representative from the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator noted to membership of the FQSSG that the Forensic Science Activity (FSA) within the Code of Practice could be reworded to address some of the challenges which were facing the community.

Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes

- 3.8. The group debated and agreed the need for accreditation of the end-to-end process.
- 3.9. The group agreed that one of the key discussion points to address was whether friction ridge detail comparison should be viewed as one speciality covering both palm and plantar. The group discussed how scientifically the two techniques are the same. It was further discussed that some organisations state they do not undertake plantar comparisons and thus could not be accredited for a process that included both and that additionally, plantar is rarely seen and therefore difficult for UKAS to accredit. The group agreed that care should be taken not be prescriptive in assigning working protocol.
- 3.10. It was agreed that terminology should be reviewed, carefully considered, and documented. The use and definition of source was discussed as an example.
- 3.11. It was agreed that small subgroup should be developed to discuss the scope matter further. This should include UKAS, a variety of smaller and larger organisations (both police forces and if possible sole providers), and a representative from the FCN.
- ACTION 2:** FQSSG members to consider and send proposed representatives for a working group to the FQSSG Chair and the representative from the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator.
- 3.12. It was concluded that the group would need to review the appendix and existing guidance and update these to reflect current practice. The group would also need to develop a glossary for standard definitions of terminology.

4. Membership

- 4.1. The FQSSG discussed the membership of the group. The following decisions were made:
- 4.1.1. Representation from the Forensic Capability Network is to be added to the terms of reference.
- 4.1.2. Representation from the Police Digital Service to be added to the terms of reference.

Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes – Minutes

4.1.3. Representation from FEL was not required for full membership on the FQSSG, but representatives were to be invited when input was deemed necessary.

ACTION 3: Representative for the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator to confirm with the Regulator whether FEL should be represented on the FQSSG.

4.1.4. A representative for the Chartered Society of Forensic Science was to be identified for membership on FQSSG. The group discussed that should the Chartered Society have any representatives who were sole providers, this would be beneficial for membership.

4.1.5. A representative for the Crown Prosecution Service was to be identified for membership on FQSSG.

4.1.6. A representative of the academic community was to be identified and invited for membership of the FQSSG as an observer. The Alan Turing Institute was discussed as an organisation to approach.

4.1.7. It was discussed and agreed that the National Police Chiefs' Council would be sufficiently represented by NPCC sponsored bodies such FCN and Police forces.

ACTION 4: Representative for the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator to identify and invite representatives from the Police Digital Service, the Crown Prosecution Service, the Chartered Society of Forensic Science and the academic community.

ACTION 5: Representative for the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator to update the FQSSG terms of reference.

5. Updates

5.1. The representative from the Home Office Biometrics programme provided an update to the FQSSG. There were no questions.

6. Any other business

6.1. The next meeting of the FQSSG was agreed for January 2024 and would take place in person.

Annex A

Representatives present:

Chair

Ex-Chair

Metropolitan Police Service

Home Office Biometrics Programme

Forensic Information Database Service (FINDS)

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Forensic Capability Network (FCN)

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl)

Greater Manchester Police

Yorkshire and Humber Police

Office of the Forensic Science Regulator

Home Office (secretariat)

Apologies received

Fingerprint Associates Limited