



# Forensic Science Regulator

## Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group

### Note of the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2024 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) and the members gave a brief introduction. A list of attendees by organisation is available at Annex A.

#### 2. Review of Minutes and Actions Update

- 2.1. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed with no corrections and would be published by the secretariat.

**ACTION 1:** Secretariat to publish the minutes from the previous meeting.

- 2.2. The outstanding actions from the previous meeting in December 2023 were review. The following updates were provided, and the remaining actions were closed.

Action 4: Representative for the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator to identify and invite representatives from the Police Digital Service (PDS), the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), the Chartered Society of Forensic Science (CSFS) and the academic community.

- 2.2.1. Update on Action 4, December 2023: Representatives from PDS and CPS had been identified. A representative from CSFS was still to be considered.

**ACTION 2:** Follow up with OFSR representative regarding CSofS representative for the FQSSG.

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**3. Workplan Update**

- 3.1. The OFSR representative provided the group an overview of the updates to the FQSSG workplan. The key points were:
- 3.2. Four key documents that needed to be completed within the next few months which were:
  - Accreditation schedule
  - Updated FSA-MTP-101 to reflect Version 2 of the Code
  - Terminology document
  - FSA Specific requirements
- 3.3. The OFSR representative then asked for the members for their opinion regarding a fifth key document, that would be 'a guide to the compliance process'. The MPS representative added that the group have already started work on some of the key documents mentioned and highlighted that the list should be six pieces of work as it has not included the interpretation guidance document.
- 3.4. The group discussed the potential for 'a guide to the compliance process' at length, it was decided that the group could look into producing this document, however, prior to beginning this task more detail as to what it should include would be necessary.

**DFC and FSR Code update**

- 3.5. The programme directors working on the digital fingerprint capability from the Police Digital Service (PDS) presented to members of the FQSSG on the new fingerprint comparison capability which was intended to standardise fingerprint provisions nationally
- 3.6. The presentation provided an update regarding how this new capability fit within the FSR's Statutory Code. The key areas of the update focussed on:
  - Validation
  - Control of data and documents

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- Environment and business continuity
- Cognitive bias
- Technical records and traceability

3.7. The representative from the Metropolitan Police Service highlighted that this new fingerprint comparison technology assists with simplifying the processes to ensure a demonstration of compliance to the codes and relevant standards.

3.8. The Chair thanked the representative for their presentation and opened for questions. A representative from Yorkshire and the Humber asked a question regarding if the use of the cloud has been covered within the findings system which was responded to by one of the officials from PDS, who also offered reassurance that it had.

#### **4. Accreditation Schedule – Wording update and discussion**

4.1. The UKAS representative presented a copy of the draft accreditation schedule to the FQSSG members and highlighted the key changes to the document which were as follows:

- Separated out the schedule into activity.
- Amended the materials and products tested section, where it typically mentions the terms 'plantar', 'palm' and 'friction ridge detail'.
- Defined activities that were determined through the group searching of 'friction ridge detail', i.e., Indent1.
- The addition of identity check i.e., print to print, scene linking as an activity, direct comparison of persons of interest and opinion and interpretation statement.

4.2. The UKAS representative added that representatives of the group have discussed and agreed on the different activities and that there would be a need to have definitions for the terminology used within the document to support the schedule.

4.3. The representative from the PDS asked whether the schedule had thought about the new fingerprint comparison capability, which was responded to by the

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MPS representative, who assured that this could be included as tool which assists in delivering the activity.

**5. Accreditation Schedule – Terminology**

5.1. Prior to the meeting an updated draft of the friction ridge detail terminology guidance was circulated to the members of the FQSSG. The MPS representative provided a brief update to the members by highlighting that the layout is similar to the old document, but the content has more detail which is specific for the fingerprint community with additional new terminology.

**6. IDENT 1 Declaration**

6.1. The representative from the FCN provided an update regarding the work to produce consistent wording for IDENT 1 declarations, which was circulated to the group prior to the meeting. The main points were:

- The wording has been agreed by the National Fingerprint and Footwear Board and the IRM.
- A consistent approach is supported within the community.
- The wording has also been shared throughout the fingerprint community.
- Only a few queries raised regarding the actual requirement to make a declaration, which has been addressed.

**7. Update on Interpretation Specialist Group**

7.1. The representative from MPS, who represented the FQSSG on the Interpretation specialist group, shared their views on progress so far noting at the time of the meeting, the overarching guidance would need to be condense and simplified for fingerprint practitioners.

7.2. The representative from MPS shared reflections that the issues raised within the Interpretation Specialist Group is shared within the fingerprint community and would be an 'educational piece' for the group to inform practitioners and define what interpretation means within the fingerprint community.

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- 7.3. The representative from MPS reiterated that it seemed there was a general move away from categorial opinions to evaluative, the representative raised that as more tools to support working practice were being developed whether this would be the right approach for fingerprints. The representative shared that there is a lot of work to do within the community to agree to definitions within interpretation for a guidance document to be produced by the group.
- 7.4. The chair commented that a key deliverable would be that the delivery of the interpretation should be in a format that practitioners would understand and that it would be challenging to impose a change within the community.
- 7.5. The UKAS representative asked whether the MPS representative knew what the timeline for this guidance document to be completed, the MPS representative shared that the deadline was Spring 2024 however there has been an extension.
- 7.6. The group discussed at length defining activity within the interpretation document and the difficulty of defining how to assess and measure competence within fingerprint cases, as currently there are limitations as to what fingerprint practitioners can do.

**8. Any other business**

- 8.1. The chair thanked the members and closed the meeting.
- 8.2. The next meeting of the FQSSG was to be confirmed.

## **Annex A**

### **Representatives present:**

Chair

United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS)

Forensic Capability Network (FCN)

Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl)

Home Office Biometrics Programme

Two representatives from the Police Digital Service

Forensic Information Database Service (FINDS)

Greater Manchester Police

Crown Prosecution Service

Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)

Two representatives from the Office of the Forensic Science Regulator

Northumbria Police

Yorkshire and Humber Police

### **Apologies received**

Fingerprint Associates Limited

Home Office (secretariat)