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# Forensic Science Regulator

## Interpretation Specialist Group (SG) Meeting

**Note of the meeting held on 08 January 2026 in 23  
Stephenson Street, Birmingham, and Online via MS Teams**

### **1. Welcome**

- 1.1.1. Chair opened the meeting, welcoming attendees.
- 1.1.2. The minutes from the previous meeting were discussed and agreed by the group without any amendments.

### **2. Actions from the previous meeting**

#### **2.1. Action 60**

- 2.1.1. Action 60 - RSS representative to review the relevance and utility of the RSS documents, as well as the Royal Society primer, and identify key insights.
- 2.1.2. The RSS representative noted that the current draft of Interpretation Guidance document appears to be consistent with the existing primers from the Royal Society/Royal Society of Edinburgh. They will review and inform group if there are any issues.

#### **2.2. Actions 63 and 64**

- 2.2.1. Action 63 - Medical Forensic specialist group (MFSG) representative to highlight the challenges in determining known values within the medical forensic community due to variability in biological and anatomical factors.
- 2.2.2. Action 64 - MFSG representative to highlight terminology within the draft guidance document that is cross-cutting within medical terms and feedback to the group.

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- 2.2.3. Written updates have been previously received from the MFSG representative.
- 2.2.4. OFSR members will share these updates with the group.
- 2.3. Action 67**
- 2.3.1. Action 67- OFSR representative to explore opportunities for the Regulator to assist in obtaining higher-quality proficiency testing (PT), potentially through external bodies.
- 2.3.2. OSFR stated that this is still ongoing with the Regulator. The Chair highlighted the importance of Proficiency trials especially in some forensic science disciplines.
- 2.4. Action 68**
- 2.5. Action 68 - Coordinate sub-groups to produce discipline-specific draft guidance documents, including templates for structure and topics, with an agreed timeline.
- 2.5.1. This work is ongoing, and there have been recent meetings with drugs and toxicology groups.
- 2.6. Action 75**
- 2.6.1. Action 75 – OFSR Marks Traces and Patterns (MTP) Scientific Support to refresh Cognitive Bias guidance document.
- 2.6.2. Update from OFSR MTP scientific support. Current aim is for the document to be updated by end of March subject to competing priorities within the team.
- 2.7. Action 81**
- 2.7.1. Action 81 - Glossary of the document to be reviewed.
- 2.7.2. This action is ongoing, and to be covered later in the meeting.
- 2.8. Action 83**
- 2.9. Action 83 - Communications and deployment strategy of the FSA specific guidance to be developed with chairs/representatives from FSA specific groups.
- 2.9.1. This action is ongoing, and to be covered later in the meeting.

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2.9.2. The Chair noted that the University of Lausanne and Kings College London are planning to hold a joint workshop in April on Interpretation Standards, and this might include coverage of the OSFR guidance document, once published.

**2.10. Action 87**

2.10.1. Action 87 – Calibration of expertise - approach to calibration and proficiency testing within the document - request for Regulator's view as to how the guidance document should approach this.

2.10.2. Chair to have a meeting with the Regulator in the coming week where this will be picked up as part of discussions.

**2.11. Action 88**

2.11.1. Action 88 - The OFSR to look at drawing together an overview of the working group structure with more detail on memberships of each WG.

2.11.2. This action is ongoing.

**2.12. Action 90**

2.12.1. Action 90 - OFSR to feedback Regulator view on consultation and timelines to the SG once this is agreed.

2.12.2. Timelines communicated since previous meeting. Targeted consultation of key stakeholders took place between 31/10/2025 and 12/12/2025.

2.12.3. Action closed.

**3. Review of progress on Main document****3.1. Responses to consultation**

3.1.1. OSFR representatives and the Chair have conducted an initial review of all consultation responses prior to the meeting.

3.1.2. The responses and feedback received in the consultation have been shared with the group in the meeting papers.

3.1.3. The group expressed gratitude for the time and care taken by everyone who responded to the consultation.

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3.1.4. The group undertook a discussion of feedback from the consultation, with the key areas of discussion set out below.

**3.2. Compatibility with ISO 21043 part 4**

3.2.1. Some consultation comments suggested aligning more closely with the ISO 21043 Part 4: Interpretation standard.

3.2.2. Key discussion points:

- a. It was noted that the current regulatory context in England and Wales uses the ISO 17025 standard. ISO 21043 is not currently required by the Regulator.
- b. The Chair identified that, in drafting the guidance document, consideration had been given to ISO 21043 Part 4, and while the group had sought to remain broadly compatible with that standard, there were areas of intentional divergence, where this was considered beneficial by the group.
- c. Members supported being explicit (e.g. in the introduction to the guidance) about the broad compatibility with ISO 21043 Part 4, and where the guidance intentionally diverges from that ISO standard.

3.2.3. It was agreed that the group's discussions around compatibility with ISO 21043, and the approach to this in the proposed approach to this in the guidance document, should be included in the forthcoming meeting between the Chair and Regulator.

3.2.4. **Action** – OSFR and Chair to discuss conversations around ISO 21043 with the Regulator in upcoming meeting.

3.2.5. Similarly, the group highlighted the intention to align terminology within the glossary of the guidance with that used within ISO 21043 Part 1 where this was appropriate.

**3.3. Consideration of Document Title and Scope**

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- 3.3.1. Following consultation feedback, a substantial discussion took place on whether the titling of the document should be framed around “interpretation” (as per the current, consultation draft), “reporting”, or “interpreting and communicating”.
- 3.3.2. Key points:
- a. Many practitioners who conduct factual reporting might wrongly assume the document does not apply to them if the title focuses solely on “interpretation”.
  - b. Conversely, it was also highlighted that factual interpretation reporting by an expert is a form of interpretation, i.e. factual interpretation, and that there is a need to differentiate this from lay witnesses of fact.
  - c. A focus on solely “reporting” also risks confusion with the existing OFSR reporting guidance.
  - d. Following discussions, “Interpreting and Communicating” was viewed favourably by the group as it focuses on activities rather than job titles and emphasises the processes common to all expert outputs.
  - e. The group agreed to avoid language that could imply the guidance is for lay witnesses. It applies to anyone whose work may be regarded by a court as an expert, and who were undertaking forensic science activities, regardless of job title. It was also noted that the content of the guidance might also be of interest of other expert witnesses, outside of forensic science.
  - f. Members agreed the introduction should explicitly outline the intended audience and scope.
- 3.3.3. The OFSR and Chair will discuss the revised approach to the titling of the guidance in the upcoming meeting with the Regulator. Before then an adjusted draft will be shared with group to identify any potential showstoppers or issues with the proposed change.

**4. Working group updates****4.1. Biology Group**

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- 4.1.1. The draft of the Biology discipline specific guidance has had some feedback so far. The Chair has also reviewed the document and will provide further feedback on the current draft.
- 4.1.2. Some aspects of the current draft were included to stimulate discussion, and these may need to be revised or reconsidered based on feedback.
- 4.1.3. The draft will be shared by the Biology representative with the discipline working group.

**4.2. Cell Site**

- 4.2.1. A draft of the discipline specific guidance is with the OSFR and waiting for feedback. The representative from this group highlighted there is a significant need for this guidance within the discipline.

**4.3. Firearms**

- 4.3.1. The Firearms discipline specific guidance is still under development. Initial drafts have been shared, however there is a need for further feedback. The representative from this group will seek to get the draft completed in the next month and then seek further feedback from the discipline working group.

**4.4. Fire Investigation**

- 4.4.1. In process of drafting and sharing with group. There has been a lot of helpful discussion in previous meetings, and this is now being written up. The group are hopeful that this will be ready to be discussed at the next meeting.

**4.5. Forensic Collision Investigation**

- 4.5.1. There were discussions around the readiness of those working in Forensic Collision Investigation to adapt to the approaches set out in the main guidance document.

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- 4.5.2. The FCI representative highlighted that the draft of the guidance had already stimulated thinking in the FCI community, notably in relation to the current wording of the FSA for this area, INC 101, and where this may need to be revised, for example in relation to reconstruction aspects within in the FSA.
- 4.5.3. There was a reflection that there are still areas for education on interpretation approaches within the field.
- 4.5.4. In terms of the discipline specific guidance, it was noted that there were also challenges with the overlap aspects with the DIG 100 and DIG 301 FSAs, which form part of this discipline, but which are outside of INC 101.
- 4.5.5. Chair highlighted that the documents should be discipline, rather than FSA specific, and therefore the Forensic Collision Investigation document could cover aspects of other FSAs from this discipline if needed.
- 4.5.6. The FCI group are looking to understand what areas need to be included in their discipline specific guidance and ensure that any area where there is overlap with other disciplines, does not contradict the specific guidance for those areas.

**4.6. Friction Ridge Detail (FRD)**

- 4.6.1. Representative not present, OSFR provided an update.
- 4.6.2. The FRD group is exploring the evidential scale aspects for FRD. There are competing priorities in the FRD world at the moment due to other changes to the area.

**4.7. Drugs and Toxicology**

- 4.7.1. The OFSR hosted a recent workshop held by their working group. Work by this group is ongoing, with regular meetings being held.

**4.8. Digital (non-cell site)**

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- 4.8.1. A meeting will be scheduled between the Chair, OFSR, and the digital portfolio lead to establish direction.
- 4.8.2. **Action** – OFSR to arrange a call with Chair and OFSR portfolio lead for digital (non-cell site)

**4.9. Oversight**

- 4.9.1. The working groups are in mixed position.
- 4.9.2. The Chair noted that progress varies significantly between discipline groups. Next meeting will require:
  - a. submission of all available drafts
  - b. structured updates from every subgroup
- 4.9.3. **Action** – For next meeting, latest drafts to be included in papers, and an update from all subgroups.

**5. Next Steps****5.1. Finalisation of the document and approval process**

- 5.1.1. OFSR will integrate consultation responses, in light of the group's discussions, into a revised draft.
- 5.1.2. A near-final version will be circulated by Monday morning for group feedback within 48 hours.
- 5.1.3. The Chair and OFSR will meet the Regulator to confirm positions on key issues, including ISO compatibility, calibration of expertise, and document scope.
- 5.1.4. Regulator will make ultimate decision on sign-off for publication.

**5.2. Launch Strategy**

- 5.2.1. Launch strategy will be discussed with Regulator and will involve website publication.

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5.2.2. May also involve direct distribution to stakeholders and inclusion in April's joint Lausanne–King's College London workshop on Interpretation Standards, subject to discussion with the Regulator.

5.2.3. The Chair thanked the group for the time, effort and for the constructive contributions made by the whole group.

**5.3. Post launch**

5.3.1. Going forward the group will continue with oversight of the development of the discipline specific guidance, as well as providing advice on how the Regulator can monitor adoption of the approaches within the guidance once published.

**6. AOB**

6.1.1. Legal Academia representative highlighted that the new version of the Criminal Procedure Rules (2025) has been published. All CPR references in the document must be checked before publication.

6.1.2. Discussion of Case Review, not currently covered by the code. Members noted the need for future work thinking about possible approaches to compliance for this FSA, and what possible alternatives might look like.

**7. Date of next meeting**

7.1.1. Specific date to be determined, but to be scheduled for April/May 2026, after publication of the main document.

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## **Annex A – meeting attendees**

### **Representatives present:**

#### **In person**

Chair

Office of the Forensic Science Regulator (OFSR) Scientific Lead

Office of the Forensic Science Regulator's Scientific Support

Representative from the Association of Forensic Service Providers (AFSP) (Eurofins)

Representative from Firearms SG (and AFSP)

Chartered Society of Forensic Science (CSoFS) x 1

Incident Examination Specialist Group (collision investigation)

#### **Online**

Royal Statistical Society (RSS)

Representative from the Association of Forensic Service Providers (AFSP) (Cellmark)

Biology SG Chair

Legal academic

Chartered Society of Forensic Science (CSoFS) x 1

UKAS

Digital Forensics Specialist Group Representative

Incident Examination SG x1

#### **Apologies received.**

Incident Examination Specialist Group (fire investigation) x1

Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG) x1

Medical Forensics Specialist Group

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**ACTION 60:** RSS representative to review the relevance and utility of the RSS documents, as well as the Royal Society primer, and identify key insights.

**ACTION 63:** MFSG representative to highlight the challenges in determining known values within the medical forensic community due to variability in biological and anatomical factors.

**ACTION 64:** MFSG representative to highlight terminology within the draft guidance document that is crosscutting within medical terminology and feedback to the members of the Interpretation SG at the next meeting.

**ACTION 67:** OFSR representative to explore opportunities for the Regulator to assist in obtaining higher-quality proficiency testing (PT), potentially through external bodies.

**ACTION 68:** The co-ordination of working groups to produce discipline specific draft guidance documents, including templates for structure and topics with an agreed timeline.

**ACTION 75:** OFSR MTP Scientific Support to refresh Cognitive Bias guidance document.

**ACTION 81:** Members to review the glossary of the draft guidance document, which will be an agenda item at the next meeting. **Closed**

**ACTION 83:** OFSR and Chair to send out communications and a strategy of the discipline specific guidance to be developed with chairs/representatives from discipline specific groups.

**Action 87** Chair identified that calibration of expertise is an area where the SG would need to get the Regulator's view as to how this should be approached within the guidance, given the range of views within the group.

**Action 88:** The OFSR to look at drawing together an overview of the working group structure with more detail memberships of each WG.

**Action 90:** OFSR to feedback Regulator view on consultation and timelines to the SG once this is agreed. **Closed**

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**Actions 63 and 64:** OSFR to share previously received written updates with the group.

**Action 91:** OSFR and Chair to discuss conversations around ISO 21043 with the Regulator in upcoming meeting. **NEW**

**Action 92:** OFSR to arrange a call with Chair and OFSR portfolio lead for digital (non-cell site). **NEW**

**Action 93:** For next meeting, latest drafts to be included in papers, and an update from all subgroups. **NEW**