



Forensic Science Regulator

Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group

Note of the meeting held on 17 March 2026 in 23 Stephenson Street, Birmingham and Online via MS Teams

1. Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1.1 The Chair Introduced members to the meeting of the Fingerprint Quality Standards Specialist Group (FQSSG). Given the length of time since the last meeting, as well as a number of changes to the membership of the group, the group undertook a round of introductions.

2. Chair's Update

- 2.1.1 The Chair noted the time since the last meeting of the group and some of the changes that have occurred during that time.
- 2.1.2 The Chair reiterated the group's remit: to provide expert advice to the Forensic Science Regulator (the Regulator) on fingerprint quality standards and to oversee development, implementation and consistency of practice across the UK fingerprint community.
- 2.1.3 The Chair Summarised the major developments since the last meeting, including:
- a. Appointment of the new Regulator.
 - b. Publication of Version 2 of the FSR Code of Practice (October 2025).
- 2.1.4 The minutes from the last meeting were discussed and agreed as accurate.

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- 2.1.5 The group agreed that all previous actions from the last meeting are now outdated and should be disregarded; new actions will be established as part of the discussions within this meeting.

3. Terms of Reference

- 3.1.1 OSFR representative provided an overview of the Terms of Reference document, which had been shared with the group within the meeting papers.
- 3.1.2 The group were asked for any feedback or specific issues with the current draft, or questions regarding the approach.
- 3.1.3 Members confirmed they had reviewed the updated Terms of Reference and approved the wording without amendment.

4. Updates

4.1 Regulator

- 4.1.1 Representative from the OSFR provided an update to the group, outlining some of the key changes since the last meeting. These included:
- a. The new Regulator has been in post since July 2025, with a background from MHRA.
 - b. The new version of the Code (version 2) came into force in October 2025. The revision gave opportunities to introduce changes to Friction Ridge Detail (FRD) requirements, informed by the community.
 - c. The transition of fingerprint bureaux to the new Code - this is an agenda item for later in the meeting.
 - d. The Regulator's guidance on 'Forensic Science Activities - Interpretation and communication' (FSR-GUI-0004) was published on the 26th of January. The intention is that this guidance document will be supported by separate, discipline specific interpretation guidance for different disciplines, including for FRD. The FRD discipline specific guidance is being developed by a working group and will be discussed later in the meeting.

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- e. Declarations Guidance document has been recently published (on 13 March 2026).

4.1.2 Looking ahead, the OSFR is looking to establish up a cross-cutting Marks, Traces and Patterns (MTP) group, to look across the wider portfolio, which includes FRD, and draw together areas of best practice. The intention is that this will include representation from the FQSSG.

4.1.3 The Regulator has determined that version 3 of the Code should be developed, and this will include any needed changes for existing FSAs. There is scope for this group to input into that revision.

4.2 UKAS

4.2.1 UKAS representative provided update to the group. They highlighted changes in UKAS staff since the last meeting.

4.2.2 There has been a focus on the transition to version 2 of the Code, including FRD transition to the reframed FSA requirements, and the FSA specific requirements included within. UKAS have recently published FAQs to support the community in transitioning to the new requirements.

4.2.3 At the time of the meeting, one force has successfully transitioned to version 2 of the Code. UKAS are awaiting further submissions from other police forces for transition process.

4.2.4 UKAS emphasised the need for early submission of transition documentation to avoid any potential bottlenecks.

4.2.5 The group discussed the risks around timelines for transition, and whether there were other areas of support that could be provided by the group. FCN are undertaking landscape calls with forces to understand how the transition process is going. 17 forces have registered for these so far.

4.2.6 UKAS have also undertaken some extension to scope activities for the Digital Fingerprint Capability (DFC), with some forces having been successful in achieving this.

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4.3 FCN

- 4.3.1 FCN representative updated the group on the support provided to the community in relation to FRD transition to version 2 of the Code.
- 4.3.2 A webinar to the community was recently held, which set out the required changes that need to be made to meet the new requirements.
- 4.3.3 The webinar had good attendance, with over 100 attendees. The slide deck from the session has been shared with the community and will also be mentioned in the Quality Matters newsletter this week.
- 4.3.4 FCN have also produced Ground Truth Data (GTD) to support fingerprint bureaux in uplifting their validation, where necessary, to include all sources of FRD.
- 4.3.5 They have asked for feedback/results from the comparison work from the community's validation uplift, to enhance the GTD dataset produced.
- 4.3.6 The Chair asked for slide deck to be shared with group – actioned by FCN representatives.
- 4.3.7 FCN have also been updating a FRD contact list. The group agreed that this should be provided to the group.
- 4.3.8 **ACTION** – For FCN to provide the FQSSG with an updated FRD contact list (FRD leads).

4.4 Discussion of Matcher changes

- 4.4.1 MPS representative highlighted some changes that are underway in relation to the Matcher system.
- 4.4.2 The Home Office Biometrics programme (HOB) is looking to add the Orthogonal matcher to the system. This is a re-ranking process for the Matcher system. Other incremental changes are being looked at with the system.
- 4.4.3 Concerns were raised that repeated changes may trigger multiple cycles of local validation/verification with associated burdens.

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- 4.4.4 The UKAS representative noted that more information on the changes, the timeframes, and the impact involved, would need to be seen to help inform how this can be managed.
- 4.4.5 **ACTION** – OSFR to request an update from the HOB representative to get a breakdown of the intended future changes for Matcher, what the expected impact will be on bureaux, and what the timelines are expected to be – and who has been engaged in relation to these changes.

5. FRD Transition

5.1 Background

- 5.1.1 OSFR representative summarised the background of the changes made in version 2 of the Code to sub-activities of MTP 101 – Friction ridge detail: comparison. The sub-activities were reframed from ‘tests’ to a ‘service-based’ approach, that more closely reflected the nature of the work.
- 5.1.2 These changes had implications for how validation should be demonstrated for these activities, with the need for bureaux to uplift their validation to plug any gaps and represent all sources of FRD.
- 5.1.3 The Code changes also introduced changes to the FSA specific requirements for this FSA, relating to the checking and reviewing processes.
- 5.1.4 FCN have been heavily involved in providing support to the community to help bureaux transition to the new code, including recent webinar and provision of GTD to support uplifting validation.
- 5.1.5 There has previously been a concern that the community thought that all aspects of the FSA have to be in scope by the deadline. However, the FCN webinar and the recent letter to SAs from the Regulator, have helped clarify that this is not the case. It was noted that there has been positive feedback in regard to the FCN webinar.

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5.2 Validation reviews

- 5.2.1 FCN are undertaking landscape calls with bureaux to evaluate the readiness and progress of the FRD transition across the community. These are due to start w/c 23rd March. The intention is for this information to feed into the national validation tracker, updating each bureau's progress towards transition and expectations of meeting the deadline as the calls are completed.
- 5.2.2 **ACTION** – FCN to update the group on FRD transition progress with reference to the validation tracker, and the information received from landscape calls.
- 5.2.3 UKAS emphasised that there is a need for the uplifted validation to include comparison of all sources of FRD (i.e. not just an analysis that the source was e.g. plantar, palmer etc).
- 5.2.4 The representative from the MPS noted that the plantar used for GTD has to be representative of the sorts of marks, and quality of marks seen/recovered within casework.
- 5.2.5 SPA noted their intention to validate for plantar in the summer and will be using the GTD provided by FCN. While not statutorily bound to the Regulator's Code there is a desire to seek alignment between jurisdictions where possible. SPA noted the benefits of the GTD supplied by FCN, and in particular the inclusion of different quality marks.
- 5.2.6 **ACTION** FCN and UKAS to keep the group updated as to which forces which have submitted as well as any that fail to meet the deadline for submission to UKAS.
- 5.2.7 Representative from the OSFR emphasised that there is an expectation from the Regulator that bureaux should be on track to meet the deadline from transition.
- 5.2.8 The group emphasised the CPS interpretation of the secondary legislation, and the related implications of failure to comply with the requirements of the Code.

6. Membership

- 6.1.1 The group reviewed current membership, noting the recent members that have joined the group, including new members from SPA and academia. The SPA member is present in the capacity of observer.
- 6.1.2 There was discussion of any potential gaps in the current group, and where these could be strengthened.
- 6.1.3 Quality manager representation identified as a current gap. Discussion of possible QM representatives who might have FRD background.
- 6.1.4 **ACTION** – OSFR to reach out to the Chair of the National Quality Managers meeting to seek nominations of QM representative.
- 6.1.5 It was noted that the group does not currently have representation from Welsh forces/bureaux.
- 6.1.6 **ACTION** – OSFR to reach out to Welsh forces to ask if they wish to nominate a representative.
- 6.1.7 It was noted that there was also a lack of FEL representation on the group.
- 6.1.8 **ACTION** – OSFR to approach FEL network to request a representative from an FEL background.
- 6.1.9 Discussion of PSNI representation however it was noted that Regulator does not cover Northern Ireland. This will be given further consideration by the OSFR, potentially in line with the current involvement of SPA, who attend as observers from another part of the United Kingdom.

7. FRD Interpretation

7.1 Discipline Specific Interpretation Guidance

- 7.1.1 The MPS representative provided an update on the ongoing development of a guidance document on the interpretation of FRD.

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- 7.1.2 The document, which has been developed by a working group, explores changes to the established, and currently prescribed, outcomes as set out in the Code.
- 7.1.3 These changes are designed to explore the evidence not captured between outputs of “inconclusive” (neutral) and “identification” or “elimination” as per Regulator direction.
- 7.1.4 The group discussed how the guidance could set the way for bureau experts to provide additional evidence that might otherwise be unavailable to the Courts, and the issues there might be around community acceptance and implementation.
- 7.1.5 Members agreed to provide written feedback on the draft paper by end of April 2026. A revised version will be taken to the Interpretation Group on 12 May 2026.
- 7.1.6 **ACTION** – OSFR to share draft Interpretation Guidance Document with the Group for feedback to be provided. Comments to be received by end of April.

8. ESDA/FEL revisit

- 8.1.1 OSFR provided the background, relating to the use of ESDA as a contingency for FRD where items are being treated with techniques that could destroy evidence. ESDA was originally developed as an FRD technique, before also being deployed on document examination.
- 8.1.2 Previous discussions within the FQSSG in relation to this technique had indicated that this technique was used to some extent, often undertaken as a contingency step prior to chemical enhancement methods.
- 8.1.3 The group considered that the technique is used sufficiently infrequently that it already falls within the Code’s infrequent methods provisions. As such, the existing rules would apply, and an alternative compliance framework does not appear necessary.

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8.2 Workplan and Actions

- 8.2.1 OSFR to review workplan, and update the action tracker, in line with actions agreed in this meeting. This will be shared with the group.

9. AOB

9.1 Date of next meeting

- 9.1.1 Group agree that next meeting should be scheduled for June.
- 9.1.2 **ACTION** – OFSR to share 'doodle poll' for availability for next meeting.

Annex A

Representatives present:

In person:

Chair

OFSR Science Lead

OFSR Scientific Support

United Kingdom Accreditation Service UKAS

FCN (x2)

Online

Cumbria police

Forensic Information Database Service (FINDS)

London South Bank University

Metropolitan Police Service (MPS)

SPA

Apologies

CPS representative

Defence Science and Technology Organisation (Dstl)

Fingerprint Associates Limited

Home Office Biometrics Programme

Police Digital Service