

## **FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Procedures for Verification and Blind Verification**

### **1 Purpose**

Verification is the application of Analysis, Comparison, and Evaluation to a friction ridge print(s) by another examiner.

Blind verification is a type of verification by another examiner who has limited case information and does not know the evaluation decision of the primary examiner. Blind verification is used as a means to reduce confirmation bias and limit contextual bias in the examination process.

### **2 Scope**

These procedures apply to all appropriate personnel who are involved in conducting verifications or blind verifications.

Verifications must be performed on all identifications; however, other evaluation decisions may be verified. Verifications cannot be performed by an examiner who has consulted on the print(s) to be verified.

A blind verification must be performed in cases with a single evaluation decision (with the exception of the circumstances listed in Section 3.2.7 and 3.2.8). In addition, a blind verification will be performed when a print(s) being reported as an identification(s) has required resolution of a technical disagreement, unless a Consensus Panel was used. Blind verifications cannot be performed by an examiner who has consulted on the print(s) to be blind verified, has knowledge of the evaluation conclusion(s), or has detailed case information.

### **3 Procedures**

When required, verification or blind verification must be completed prior to providing those results to the contributor. If a blind verification is conducted, a separate verification is not required. A supervisor may determine that a print(s) not meeting those requirements in Section 2 will be verified and/or blind verified as the case or examination dictates.

The role of facilitator is performed by a supervisor. However, in immediate cases or other situations established by management, all or some of the administrative functions may be performed by an individual in a non-supervisor role. Permissions and limitations will be established by management in writing.

If there is a difference of conclusion (to include anatomical region and suitability for comparison), all parties will follow the FBI Laboratory Operations Manual Practices for

Resolution of Scientific or Technical Disagreement and the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Quality Assurance Manual, Procedures for Disagreements in Technical Casework, as well as Section 3.3 of these procedures.

### **3.1 Verification**

**3.1.1** The primary examiner will provide:

- The examiner's evaluation(s).
- Unmarked image(s) of the print(s) to be verified.
- Any other image(s) relied upon to arrive at the examiner's Analysis, Comparison, and Evaluation conclusion(s) (e.g., image(s) of the same print developed in a different development medium).
- All associated known exemplar(s) used by the primary examiner to support the examiner's evaluation conclusion.

**3.1.2** The facilitator selects the verifier and ensures the applicable verification materials are provided. The facilitator may be asked to provide additional information concerning the print (such as evidence type) or coordinate the transfer of a digital image(s). The appropriate Unit Chief ensures that verifiers are chosen on a rotational basis.

**3.1.3** The verifier receives the verification materials and:

- Ensures that he/she is eligible to perform a verification as described in Section 2.
- Conducts and records an Analysis, Comparison, and Evaluation examination of the print(s) submitted for verification following the procedures in the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Operations Manual, Standard Operating Procedures for Examining Friction Ridge Prints.
- May request a digital copy of the original and/or digitally processed image(s) from the facilitator.
- May consult with another examiner. This consultation must be recorded in the case record.

**3.1.4** The verifier records the following:

- All appropriate markings on the provided unmarked image(s) of the print(s) to include:
  - The information used to reach the conclusion(s) as described in the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Operations Manual, Standard Operating Procedures for Examining Friction Ridge Prints.
  - The analysis and evaluation decision(s) reached. If the print is determined to be not suitable for comparison, the verifier must record that the verification was completed and the conclusion reached was not suitable for comparison.
  - For intentionally recorded non-standard prints that are verified as part of a records check, the verifier may record an all-inclusive agreement

with the original examiner versus recording verifying information for each print individually.

- The name(s) or unique number(s) (e.g., Universal Control Number(s)) of the individual(s) compared. For ten print verifications of submitted records, the item number of the submitted record(s) will be used.
- The notation that it is a verification.
- Signature of verifier and date or date range of verification.
- Indication in the case record of which known exemplar(s) was provided. Examples of this include transfer of the original item(s) on the chain of custody or secure initialing of a digital or physical copy of the exemplars.

**3.1.5** Once verification is completed:

- The verifier returns the completed verification materials to the facilitator.
- The facilitator will:
  - Review the conclusion(s) reached by the verifier.
  - Ensure all applicable records are returned to the primary examiner.

**3.1.5.1** If there is no disagreement, the following is recorded in the case notes:

- The conclusion(s) reached.
- Indication of which prints were verified.
- Identity of the verifier.

## **3.2 Blind Verification**

**3.2.1** The primary examiner will provide:

- The examiner's evaluation(s).
- Unmarked images(s) of the print(s) to be blind verified.
- Any other unmarked image(s) relied upon to arrive at the examiner's Analysis, Comparison, and Evaluation conclusion(s) (e.g., image(s) of the same print developed in a different development medium).
- All associated known exemplar(s) used by the primary examiner to support the examiner's evaluation conclusion.

**3.2.2** The facilitator selects the blind verifier and ensures the applicable blind verification materials are provided. The appropriate Unit Chief ensures that blind verifiers are chosen on a rotational basis.

- The facilitator must avoid providing a known exemplar(s) that may bias the blind verifier's examinations (e.g., only providing multiple recordings of the left index finger and no other known exemplar may bias the blind verifier to compare the left index finger).
- The facilitator may be asked to provide additional information concerning the print (such as evidence type) or coordinate the transfer of a digital image(s).

**3.2.3** The blind verifier receives the blind verification materials and:

- Ensures that he/she is eligible to perform a blind verification as described in Section 2.
- Conducts and records an Analysis, Comparison, and Evaluation examination of the print(s) submitted for blind verification following the procedures in the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Operations Manual, Standard Operating Procedures for Examining Friction Ridge Prints.
- May request a digital copy of the original and/or digitally processed image(s) from the facilitator.

May request to consult with another examiner. The facilitator will identify examiners with no prior knowledge of the conclusion(s). This consultation must be recorded in the case record.

**3.2.4** The blind verifier records the following:

- All appropriate markings on the provided unmarked image(s) of the blind verified print(s) to include:
  - The information used to reach the conclusion(s) as described in the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Operations Manual, Standard Operating Procedures for Examining Friction Ridge Prints.
  - The analysis and evaluation conclusion(s) reached. If the print(s) is deemed not suitable for comparison, the blind verifier must record that a blind verification was completed and the conclusion(s) reached was not suitable for comparison.
  - The name(s) or unique number(s) (e.g., Universal Control Number(s)) of the individual(s) compared.
  - The notation that it is a blind verification.
  - Signature of the blind verifier and date or date range of blind verification.
- Indication in the case record of which known exemplar(s) was provided. Examples of this include transfer of the original item(s) on the chain of custody or initialing a digital or physical copy of the exemplars.

**3.2.5** Once blind verification is completed:

- The blind verifier returns the completed blind verification materials to the facilitator. The blind verifier must await notification from the facilitator prior to any discussions about the print(s).
- The facilitator reviews the conclusion(s) reached by the blind verifier and ensures all records are returned to the primary examiner.

**3.2.5.1** If there is no disagreement, the quality step is met and the following is recorded in the case notes:

- The conclusion(s) reached.
- Indication of which prints were blind verified.
- Identity of the blind verifier.

### **3.2.6 Single Exclusion/Inconclusive Decisions with Multiple Individuals**

In instances where a single exclusion or inconclusive decision will be reported with multiple individuals, the blind verification will be performed with one or more of the known individuals. The number of individuals will be at the discretion of the facilitator and based on data such as case information or a discussion with the primary examiner.

### **3.2.7 Human Remains, Intentionally Recorded Prints, Next Generation Identification System Comparisons, and Latent to Latent Comparisons**

Blind verification is not required, but may be performed on single conclusions in the following scenarios as dictated by the needs of the examination or case:

- Unknown deceased.
- Standard or Non-standard Intentionally recorded prints.
- Next Generation Identification System comparisons, including Unsolved Latent Match cascade examinations (exclusions and inconclusive decisions only).
- Reported latent to latent identification(s) require only verification. All other conclusions of latent to latent comparisons are not verified or blind verified.

### **3.2.8 Unknown Biometric Identity Tracker**

The Unknown Biometric Identity Tracker is used to collect information about latent to latent identifications that are made between incidents as a result of an automated search in the Unsolved Latent File. All latent to latent associations were verified when originally effected. At times, a collection of associated latent to latent prints recorded in the Tracker is identified with a known individual. The required quality check for these associations will be one of the following options:

- A blind verification between the known record and a single latent print in the collection OR
- A verification between the known record and two latent prints in the collection, provided the two latent prints came from two different incident numbers.

Once the quality check requirement has been reached, no additional verifications or blind verifications are required. If there is a difference of conclusion (to include anatomical region and suitability for comparison), all parties will follow the FBI Laboratory Operations Manual Practices for Resolution of Scientific or Technical Disagreement and the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Quality Assurance Manual, Procedures for Disagreements in Technical Casework, as well as Section 3.3 of these procedures.

### **3.3 Disagreement Resolution**

If differences in conclusions (including anatomical region and suitability for comparison) are apparent after verification or blind verification, the primary examiner and the verifier or blind verifier, as applicable, will reference the FBI Laboratory Operations Manual Practices for

Resolution of Scientific or Technical Disagreement, the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Quality Assurance Manual, Procedures for Disagreements in Technical Casework, as well as Section 3.3.1 through Section 3.3.3 of these procedures to resolve these differences.

If examiners disagree on the type of print claimed (fingerprint, palm print, or impression) but the evaluation decisions agree, discussion is needed between the examiners to obtain a single analysis decision. All appropriate comparisons must be completed for the final decision of type of print. Any additional comparison(s) conducted will be treated as an additional verification or examination and recorded as such.

### **3.3.1 Differences That Do Not Require Resolution**

**3.3.1.1** If a verifier or blind verifier does not deem a print to be suitable for comparison, he/she will not be in disagreement with a conclusion of inconclusive due to the latent print and no resolution will occur. The print will be reported as inconclusive due to the latent print.

**3.3.1.2** Blind verifications conducted in Next Generation Identification System resulting in differing “no identification” conclusions (e.g., inconclusive vs. exclusion) are not considered to be in disagreement and will be reported as no identification effected.

### **3.3.2 Blind Verification**

If a blind verification undergoes disagreement resolution and the blind verifier’s original evaluation conclusion (to include anatomical region and suitability for comparison) changes, the comparison will change from a blind verification to a verification and be recorded as such.

**3.3.2.1** If, after disagreement resolution, the blind verifier changes their original conclusion to identification, an additional blind verification is required, unless a Consensus Panel was used. All other disagreement resolutions do not require an additional blind verification.

**3.3.2.2** After two unsuccessful blind verification attempts, the final quality measure will be a Consensus Panel as described in the FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Quality Assurance Manual, Procedures for Disagreements in Technical Casework. All discussions and determinations will be recorded in the case record.

#### **4 References**

FBI Laboratory Operations Manual, Practices for Resolution of Scientific or Technical Disagreement. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division. Latest Revision.

FBI Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division. Latest Revision.

FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Operations Manual, Standard Operating Procedures for Examining Friction Ridge Prints. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division. Latest Revision.

FBI Friction Ridge Discipline Quality Assurance Manual, Procedures for Disagreements in Technical Casework. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Laboratory Division. Latest Revision.

SWGFAST Glossary. Latest Revision.

Rev. #	Issue Date	History
6	10/02/17	Document names updated. Abbreviations addressed. Section 3 through Section 3.4 removed, remaining renumbered and Unit Chief responsibility place in Section 3.1.2 and Section 3.2.2.
7	04/17/20	Latent Print Units changed to Friction Ridge Discipline throughout document. Supervisor has been mostly replaced with facilitator concept which is explained in Section 3 and represented throughout document. Minor grammar, wording, and formatting changes throughout document. Added clarification to “difference of conclusion” throughout document. Claimed changed to suitable for comparison throughout document. Universal Control Number changed to unique number throughout document. Section 2, added Section 3.2.8 reference and added last paragraph. Section 3.1.4, clarification added for non-standard prints in third bullet addition. Section 3.2.7, added Standard or non-standard. Added Section 3.2.8. Added second paragraph to Section 3.3. Section 3.3.2.1 reworded for clarification.

**Approval**

Redacted - Signatures on File

Friction Ridge Discipline  
 Technical Leader

Date: 04/16/2020

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Date: 04/16/2020

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**QA Approval**

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Date: 04/16/2020