



Document #21

**Standard for Consultation
(Latent/Tenprint)
DRAFT FOR COMMENT**

1. Preamble

- 1.1. As in any scientific endeavor, an examiner may have a need to discuss the examination with another analyst. This is generally referred to as a “consultation”.
- 1.2. Consultations are a natural and positive part of the scientific process. Consultations should be supported as part of the process and must be documented. Consultations may occur at any stage of analysis, comparison, evaluation, and evaluation (ACE-V), both before and after decisions are made during the examination. Consultations may result in recognition of differences of determinations or conclusions, creating "conflicts"[1]. Consultations are also used as part of the process to address conflicts, in accordance with quality assurance policies and in lieu of more formal conflict resolution procedures.

2. Scope

This standard provides guidance for examiners when consulting with one another during ACE-V examinations and related documentation requirements. This standard also provides guidance and model examples of how consultation can be used to resolve differences of opinion.

3. Definition of Consultation

- 3.1. A consultation [1] is a significant interaction between examiners regarding one or more impressions in question.
- 3.2. An interaction is considered significant when the consultant examiner (hereafter “consultant”) conducts an Analysis or Comparison of the impression(s). Specific examples are given in Section 4. The commonality among these examples is that they include, at a minimum, an Analysis of the impression(s), and may also include a comparison and evaluation.
- 3.3. Examples are given in Section 4 of discussions falling below the level of a significant interaction that typically involve minimal (or no) analysis. These typically have less potential to impact the key decision stages of ACE-V and are often related to case efficiency, strategy for workflow, or case management.

4. Examples of Significant and Non-Significant Interactions

4.1. Significant interactions rising to the level of consultation

- 4.1.1. Specific examples of discussion between examiners that are significant enough to rise to the level of consultation include the following:

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- 4.1.1.1. Value determinations in analysis
- 4.1.1.2. Presence of significant distortions impacting the analysis or comparison
- 4.1.1.3. Presence of specific features during the analysis or comparison
- 4.1.1.4. Simultaneity of impressions
- 4.1.1.5. Whether an examination is complex or non-complex [2]
- 4.1.2. The reasoning for including the previous categories is because all of these consultations include at a minimum an analysis of the impression(s) and may also include a comparison and evaluation.
- 4.2. Interactions that are discussions, not rising to the level of consultation
 - 4.2.1. Examples of discussions between examiners that do not rise to the level of significance to be designated as consultations include the following:
 - 4.2.1.1. Suitability for automation fingerprint identification system (AFIS) entry
 - 4.2.1.2. AFIS parameters
 - 4.2.1.3. Administrative decisions such as triage
 - 4.2.1.4. Searching efficiency “search smart clues”
 - 4.2.1.5. Processing choices
 - 4.2.1.6. Anatomical origin
 - 4.2.1.7. Orientation
 - 4.2.2. These discussions typically involve minimal (or no) analysis. They typically have less potential to impact the key decision stages of ACE-V and are often related to case efficiency, strategy for workflow, or case management.
- 4.3. There may be situations where a discussion rises to the threshold of a consultation because it has a significant impact on the case.
- 4.4. If there is doubt whether a discussion has risen to the level of a consultation, it should be treated as a consultation.

5. Documentation of a Consultation

- 5.1. The purpose of documenting a consultation is to record information or guidance obtained as a result of the consultation [3].
- 5.2. Consultations must be documented in the case record (e.g., analyst bench notes, a laboratory information management system). Discussions or other communications that do not reach the level of a consultation do not need to be documented.
- 5.3. The documentation for a consultation must include the following [3]:
 - 5.3.1. Specific friction ridge impression(s) reviewed
 - 5.3.2. The nature and result of the consultation
 - 5.3.3. Initials, signature, or equivalent (e.g., unique identifier for the examiners involved)
 - 5.3.4. Date
- 5.4. Depending on the nature and extent of the consultation, the consultant examiner may satisfy the above minimum documentation requirements by including the information within the notes of the initial analyst. It is also possible in more extensive consultations that a separate set of notes, annotations, or the consultant may generate images. These must be included in the case record. Examples are provided in Section 7.

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6. Consultants for Comparison or Evaluation Should Not Subsequently be Used as Verifiers

- 6.1. An examiner who acts as a consultant during the comparison or evaluation of an impression shall not be used as the verifier for that impression.
- 6.2. An examiner who acts as a consultant during the analysis phase can be used as the verifier for that impression.

7. Case Examples

7.1. Example 1: Simple case with agreement between examiners

7.1.1. Consultation scenario

- 7.1.1.1. Examiner A is reviewing friction ridge impressions on a glass bottle received as an item of evidence (exhibit). Examiner A is unsure if one impression in particular has value for individualization, or should be considered of value for exclusion purposes only. Examiner A consults with Examiner B (the consultant examiner). Examiner B analyzes the impression on the bottle and determines that, in his opinion, it is “of value for individualization”. Examiner B shares his determination with Examiner A. Examiner A agrees and declares the impression to be “of value for individualization”.

7.1.2. Documentation

- 7.1.2.1. Examiner A’s decision is recorded in his bench notes.
- 7.1.2.2. Examiner B initials next to the statement of value in Examiner A’s notes. A date is included and the following phrase added to the margin of the notes: “Examiner B was consulted re: ‘value’ of latent print 1 (LP-1)”. Examiner B’s initials next to the decision of Examiner A indicates both the result of the consultation and that the examiners are in agreement.

7.1.3. Subsequent use of the consultant in Example 1 as a verifier

- 7.1.3.1. The consultant was used only during the analysis phase of the examination, not during comparison or evaluation. This examiner could be used as the verifier for the impression.

7.2. Example 2: Simple case with disagreement between examiners

7.2.1. Consultation scenario

- 7.2.1.1. Given the same scenario as in Example 1, Examiner B decides that LP-1 is ‘of no value’. Examiner A originally had reservations about the ‘of value for individualization’ of LP-1, but has ultimately decided that LP-1 is ‘of value for individualization’. A conflict has arisen, and has not been addressed by consultation.

7.2.2. Documentation

- 7.2.2.1. Examiner B initials next to the statement of value in Examiner A’s notes. A date is included and the following phrase added to the margin of the notes: “Examiner B was consulted re: ‘value’ of LP-1. Examiner B said LP-1 is ‘no value’ because there are too few available characteristics.”

7.2.3. Conflict resolution result

- 7.2.3.1. A conflict has arisen because there is a difference of opinion regarding a reportable conclusion. Consultation has not resolved the conflict and conflict resolution must now be initiated to resolve the disagreement [2].

7.3. Example 3: Complex case with agreement between examiners

7.3.1. Consultation scenario

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7.3.1.1. Given the evidence as in Example 1, Examiner A has decided LP-1 is ‘of value for individualization’, has compared LP-1 against a suspect in the case, and is now struggling if he has ‘sufficient agreement’ between LP-1 and the suspect’s right thumb exemplar to declare an ‘individualization’. Examiner A approaches Examiner B and asks Examiner B to perform ACE examination of LP-1. Examiner B does so and decides that LP-1 can be individualized to the suspect’s right thumbprint. Examiner B shares this decision with Examiner A. Both examiners sit down and review the examination together; discussing and conferring regarding which features were selected and compared to reach a decision. Specific challenges of the comparison are discussed and resolved. In the end, both examiners agree that LP-1 has sufficient agreement to report an ‘individualization’.

7.3.2. Documentation

7.3.2.1. During the course of examination, both analysts generated bench notes with observations of LP-1. Both examiners generated annotated images, including an annotated Analysis image and an annotated Comparison image. All of these images are included in the case record. Examiner B includes his initials and date in the margins of the bench notes of Examiner A, next to the statement, “LP-1 individualized to Doe #1”. In the margins, Examiner A writes “Consulted Examiner B re: sufficiency to ID LP-1; see additional notes.”

7.3.3. Subsequent use of the consultant in Example 3 as a verifier

7.3.3.1. The consultant was used during the comparison or evaluation phases of the examination; therefore, the consultant could not be used as the verifier for the impression.

8. References

[1] SWGFAST Document #19 (2012), Standard Terminology of Friction Ridge Examination (Latent/Tenprint), Ver. 4.0.

[2] SWGFAST Document #10 (2013), Standard for Examining Friction Ridge Impressions and Resulting Conclusions (Latent/Tenprint), Ver. 2.0.

[3] SWGFAST Document #8 (2012), Standard for the Documentation of Analysis, Comparison, Evaluation, and Verification (ACE-V) (Latent), Ver. 2.0.

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9. Revision Table

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1.0	3/14/13	N/A	4/27/13	N/A	Original Issue – Draft for Comment

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