

*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro***Title: External Technical Review****A. PURPOSE:**

To define a means by which a case or a proficiency test performed by a Trace Examiner will be Technically Reviewed when it is sent to an examiner outside of the Forensic Laboratory. This Technical Reviewer will also be the Co-Signer of the report. (See GL-18)

B. RESPONSIBILITY:

Trace Evidence Examiner (FSE 1, 2)

Immediate Supervisor (FSE 2, 3)

Quality Section

Director, Deputy Director or designee

C. DEFINITIONS:

Analyst: The individual who performs the analysis/examination and generates the draft report and final report. This individual has training and experience in the forensic discipline that the case requires. This individual must be proficiency tested in the forensic discipline.

Technical Reviewer: The co-signer of the final report. This individual is responsible for assuring that the data in the case supports the findings and that proper laboratory procedures were followed. This individual has training and experience in the forensic discipline that the case requires. The individual must be competent in the field.

Administrative Reviewer: The individual who reviews the case file for non-technical errors (typographical in nature). The Administrative Reviewer cannot be the **Analyst**.

D. PROCEDURE:

****** In the event that a case or proficiency test is sent out of the laboratory for technical review, the examiner will attempt to follow the guidelines listed below to the best of their ability, based on the circumstances of the case or proficiency test. A case or proficiency test will be sent out of the laboratory for review when there is no examiner “in-house” who “is competent in the specific field the case encompasses”. (See GL-18 Sec B)

Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

1. When an Analyst in the Trace Section determines that there is no individual available within the Laboratory to fulfill the role of Technical Reviewer for a case or a proficiency test; the Analyst will inform their immediate supervisor in writing. A copy of this memo will be placed in the case jacket.
2. The Supervisor will then inform the Quality Section of the Laboratory that an external technical review will be needed.
3. The Supervisor, Quality Section, Deputy Director, Director or other designee will contact an outside lab or other acceptable entity to identify a Technical Reviewer who has training and experience in the forensic discipline that the case requires. The Analyst will be informed as to who will be their external technical reviewer. The Analyst will contact the external Technical Reviewer and arrange for the technical review to be completed. The individual conducting the external technical review must be competent in the forensic discipline. This individual must be associated with (contract employee) or maintain employment (permanent employee) with an **ASCLD LAB or other ISO 17025 accredited body.**
4. If the external technical review is for a proficiency test, the Analyst may need to submit the results to the proficiency test vendor prior to the technical review, as often the only other technical reviewers available may also be taking the same test. If this is the case, the Analyst will submit their results to the proficiency test vendor and then wait until after the closing date of the proficiency test to send it to the Technical Reviewer.
5. The approved Technical Reviewer may come to the laboratory to conduct the Technical Review or the documents may be sent to them. (It is encouraged, when sending documents out of the laboratory, to use a personal courier or a tracked method the shipping.)
6. If the **“Technical Reviewer” comes to laboratory to conduct the Technical Review**, the following will be given to them:
 - The “Trace Section External Review Form” (QR-TR-22)
 - The complete case jacket with the original work sheets, photographs and related documents
 - A draft copy of the report
 - A copy of the related SOP’s which outline the Trace discipline being reviewed
 - A copy of SOP-TR-22 External Technical Review
 - A copy(s) of instrument calibration (if needed / case dependant)

Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

- a. The Technical Reviewer will review all the documents and follow the directions as outlined on the “Trace Section External Review Form” (QR-TR-22).
- b. If additions or corrections are necessary on the draft report, the Technical Reviewer will do so adding their initials after each edit.
- c. The Analyst will maintain notes on any technical changes when made via a verbal conversation. These notes will be placed in the case jacket.
- d. The draft report, with edits, will remain in the case jacket.
- e. The Analyst and Technical Reviewer will work together to determine the best verbiage for the final report. (See individual Trace SOP’s for further instructions)
- f. The Administrative Reviewer may write the initials of the Technical reviewer and the date of the technical review on the case jacket sticker if the Technical Reviewer is unavailable to do so.
- g. An Administrative Reviewer will review the report and the case file for non-technical errors (typographical in nature) and return the report to the Analyst. The Administrative Reviewer cannot be the **Analyst**.
- h. When printing the final report on letterhead, the Technical Reviewer’s name and title will be on the report. The Technical Reviewer’s laboratory affiliation may be listed on the report.
- i. The Technical Reviewer will sign and return the original signed report and all other documents to the Analyst.

If the **“Technical Reviewer” cannot come to the laboratory to conduct the Technical Review**, the following will be sent to them:

- The “Trace Section External Review Form” (QR-TR-22)
- Color copies of all pages contained in the case jacket. (Pages will be marked “copy”)
- A draft copy of the report
- A copy of the related SOP’s which outline the Trace discipline being reviewed
- A copy of SOP-TR-22 External Technical Review

Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

- A copy(s) of instrument calibration (if needed / case dependant)

- a. The “Technical Reviewer” will review all the documents and follow the directions as outlined for them on the “Trace Section External Review Form” (QR-TR-22).
- b. If additions or corrections are necessary on the draft report, the Technical Reviewer will do so, adding their initials after each edit.
- c. The draft report with the edits will remain in the case jacket.
- d. The Analyst and Technical Reviewer will work together to determine the best verbiage for the final report. (See individual Trace SOP’s for further instructions). The Analyst and Technical Reviewer may consult via telephone, fax, email, etc. to make edits on the draft report or address any technical issues. The Analyst will maintain notes on the changes made. These notes will remain in the original case jacket.
- e. Upon completion of the technical review, the Technical Reviewer will return the entire package of documents to the Analyst.
- f. The Administrative Reviewer may write the initials of the Technical reviewer and the date of the technical review on the case jacket sticker if the Technical Reviewer is unavailable to do so.
- g. An Administrative Reviewer will review the report and the case file for non-technical errors (typographical in nature) and return the report to the Analyst. The Administrative Reviewer cannot be the **Analyst**.
- h. When printing the final report on letterhead, the Technical Reviewer’s name and title will be on the report. The Technical Reviewer’s laboratory affiliation may be listed on the report.
- i. The signed original report shall be returned to the Analyst along with all forms and documents that were received during the Technical Review process.
- j. Shipping labels may be retained in the case jacket, although they are not required.

Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

7. The Analyst will maintain the original “Trace Section External Technical Review Form” (QR-TR-22) in the case jacket.
8. The in-house Administrative Reviewer will be responsible for updating the milestones in JTRAX/ LIMS to “Technically Reviewed” and “Administratively Reviewed”. A note will be added to the Justice Trax narrative stating that an external Technical Reviewer was used.
9. The Analyst can provide copies of the following documents to the “Technical Reviewer” for their files if requested by the “Technical Reviewer”:
 - Final Report (signed)
 - “Trace Section External Technical Review Form” (QR-TR-22)
 - Worksheets/ bench notes/ photographs

If these documents are provided to the “Technical Reviewer”, they will be marked as “copy” and date stamped prior to distribution.
10. When a case or proficiency test is sent to an “External Technical Reviewer”, the “Trace Section External Technical Form” (QR-TR-22) will be used by external Technical Reviewer. The in-house Administrative Reviewer will use the Casework Check list (QR-TR-18). A note will be made on the (QR-TR-18) that an external technical review was conducted and that a portion of this document (QR-TR-18) will remain blank.
11. In the case of a review of a proficiency test, if the Technical Reviewer agrees with the verbiage on the draft copy of the report, the Technical Reviewer may sign the draft copy. There is no need to place the report on letterhead, as it is not being sent to a submitting agency.

** As a courtesy to the Technical Reviewer, the Analyst may send courier/shipping envelopes and labels the lab’s account number to the Technical Reviewer to account for the cost of mailing services.

***If the Analyst or the Technical Reviewer is unable to use the above guidelines, due to the circumstances of the case or due to circumstances of the proficiency test, the Analyst will alert their Supervisor who will notify the Quality Section. The Quality Section will work with the Analyst and the Technical Reviewer to determine the appropriate course of action. A memo will be placed in the case

TR SOP-22 External Review

Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

Document ID: 1024

Revision: 1

Effective Date: 8/15/2014

Status: Published

Page 6 of 6

jacket outlining why SOP-TR-22 was not appropriate for use. Additionally, the memo will document the course of action taken. The Supervisor and Director or designee will be copied on this memo.

ARCHIVED