

**A. PURPOSE:**

Internal audits and External Assessments are tools used for the Management of the DSS to assess the effectiveness of and to verify compliance of the Division of Scientific Services with the requirements of:

- ANAB AR3125 and ISO 17025 accreditation Requirements
- FBI DNA Quality Assurance Standards
- ATF Minimum Required Operating Standards Audit for National Integrated Ballistic Information Network Sites
- The Division of Scientific Services own Management System Requirements

Additionally audits can be used to identify if deviations from procedures occur and to identify needed improvements.

External assessments will be performed by ANAB assessors for accreditation to the ANAB ISO/IEC 17025 Forensic Science Testing Accreditation Requirements on a schedule set by ANAB.

Additionally approved accrediting agencies are used to assess the DNA laboratory as part of the accreditation process to demonstrate the DNA laboratory's conformance to the FBI DNA Quality Assurance Standards. This assessment occurs at least every other year.

External assessments may be performed by the ATF against standards from "Minimum Required Operating Standards Audit for National Integrated Ballistic Information Network Sites". These audits will be scheduled by the ATF every 2 years after December 2020.

**B. RESPONSIBILITY:**

Top Management: will support the Quality Section in performing annual audits and in making improvements to the Quality and Management Systems as deficiencies or opportunities for improvement are identified. Top management will continue to support travel and education for auditor training courses as funds are available.

Assistant Director: will aid in the support of annual audits and in making improvements to the Quality and Management Systems as deficiencies or opportunities for improvement are identified.

Quality Assurance Manager (QM): is responsible to schedule internal audits (with the exception of the DNA Unit) and work to lead the audit teams through the audit process. The QM is also responsible to review the individual Unit audits and write the final audit documents to present to Top Management. The QM is responsible to work with ANAB to schedule all ANAB external assessment activities.

FB/DNA Quality Assurance Manager (or FB/DNA QM): the FB/DNA QM is responsible to work with the QM and audit teams to perform the annual internal quality audit of all DSS Units.

*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro*

Assistant Director of the State Forensic Science Laboratory (ADFL): will aid in the support of annual audits and in making improvements to the Quality and Management Systems as deficiencies or opportunities for improvement are identified as related to the areas they manage.

DNA Technical Leader: is responsible to work with Management to schedule/approve all DNA internal and external audits. The Technical Leader will ensure that audit teams (internal and external) meet the requirements of the FBI DNA QAS document.

Audit Team Members: Members are to perform audits in an unbiased manner, per the direction of the QM and this SOP.

Audit teams shall be composed of personnel who have attended ISO, ASCLD/LAB Legacy or International, ANAB or FBI DNA QAS audit training (or other ISO audit preparatory courses). Any additional lab personnel must be trained internally by a member of the Quality Section (or designee) and deemed qualified before participating in an internal audit. Every attempt will be made to assign audit teams so that they are independent of the activity being audited. Each unit will be audited by members of the audit team.

## **C. PROCEDURE:**

### **1. Internal Audits:**

- a. Audits of the Management System will be conducted no less than once annually under the direction of the QM. In general, the Quality Assurance Manager and FB/DNA Quality Assurance Manager will lead audits. The QM may utilize other individuals to assist in this function depending on need. Every attempt will be made to ensure that audits are performed by those independent of the activities of the specific Unit being audited. The QM, with key management, will review all suspected non-conformities to determine if they are truly non-conformities or rarely occurring instances. Items identified as true non-conformities will be followed-up using the QAR procedure. Note that items identified during the audit process may require follow up but the follow-up may not rise to the level of a QAR.

Some audit activities may take place at different points within the year. This is to allow a more thorough assessment of specific activities. The QM may schedule a specific task to be assessed in multiple areas in a limited time frame to determine if there is any variation among units performing the task. When this occurs, the Quality Section will record the actions and the documentation will be considered as part of the annual internal audit summary document.

As possible the QM may review Unit case files throughout the year. The goal is to compare cases within Units to verify compliance to DSS SOPs. Documentation of the review(s) will be maintained and included in the annual audit summary document.

- b. The Quality Section, as appropriate, will:

- i. Schedule audits annually to ensure that they are completed annually (no sooner than 10 months from prior internal audit unless deemed necessary). Audits performed throughout the year may be used as components to the Annual Internal Audit. Generally audits will be performed continuously throughout the year and the documentation of each will be used to compile a full annual audit.
- ii. Identify members of the staff that qualify as Audit team members, when audit teams are used.
- iii. For each audit, identify the scope and criteria of the audit.
- iv. Ensure each aspect of the Management System is audited.
- v. Ensure that direct observation for each discipline is performed as part of the auditing activities.
  - (a) Direct observation will be performed on a sample of activities under each of the Disciplines identified under the DSS Scope of Accreditation document.
- vi. Identify system deficiencies and assign QARs as required for the deficiencies.
  - (a) For non-conformities relating to General Laboratory SOPs the Quality Section will work with Key Management to resolve/improve the issue.
  - (b) For non-conformities relating to specific Units the Quality Section will work with the Manager of the Unit(or their designee) to resolve/improve the issue.
- vii. Prepare an Audit report and any required documentation. Note that the annual audit will ensure that the DSS is in compliance with the current ANAB accreditation program (that is in affect at the time of the audit).

The Audit report may be in the form of a summary document and the notes and/or other documents created during the audit will be maintained in support of the summary document. It is expected that some potential issues brought forth by auditors will be removed as issues as they are investigated. These issues may not be included in the summary document.

The QM will provide the Audit document to the Assistant Director(s),Deputy Directors and Director for review.
- viii. The Audit report should minimally include or reference documentation of:
  - (a) Documentation of the review of Management System elements.
  - (b) Cases reviewed per Unit.
  - (c) Problems or deficiencies noted, and recommendations for addressing them.
  - (d) Record(s)/Quality Action Request (QAR) of the actions taken for any non-conformity during the audit year.

- (e) The ANAB audit checklist may be used in its entirety or in portions to assist in the audit documentation.
- ix. The QM will work with Key Management to finalize the audit, follow through on any QARs performed as a result of the audit.

Not all items suggested from the annual audit will require QARs. When an issue is identified that is in conflict with ANAB accreditation standards or the Division's own policy a QAR will be required.
- x. The QM will maintain a copy of the Audit report and supporting documentation for not less than 10 years.
- c. Audit Teams (when used):
  - i. Whenever possible Audit teams will consist of employees who have audit training.
  - ii. Teams will be formed to audit:
    - (a) Management System procedure adherence including:
      - (i) Management issues
      - (ii) Document Control
      - (iii) Review of Requests, Tenders and Contracts
      - (iv) Purchasing
      - (v) Service to customers
      - (vi) Complaints
      - (vii) Control of non-conforming tests
      - (viii) QARs
      - (ix) Record Control
      - (x) Audits
      - (xi) Management Reviews
    - (b) Individual Units adherence to appropriate SOPs including the following:
      - (i) Technical Records
      - (ii) Personnel Qualifications
      - (iii) Competency Tests
      - (iv) Accommodations and Environmental Conditions
      - (v) Methods (selection/validation/non-standard)

- (vi) Uncertainty of measurement
- (vii) Data control
- (viii) Instrumentation/Equipment
- (ix) Traceability
- (x) Testing (reference materials/standards/sampling)
- (xi) Evidence handling
- (xii) Quality Assurance
- (xiii) Reporting (Reports/Report Amendments)

iii. Teams, when used, will utilize this SOP to ensure that needed guidelines are followed. The QM may wish to develop audit checklists to use as guidance in performing and documenting internal audits.

iv. Direct observation of activities will be used as a portion of each annual internal audit. Members of the audit team will perform the direct observations.

For this the auditor will observe a member of a unit performing a task and document the observation. The auditor will follow the work performed and compare this to the current SOP for the task(s). The auditor will document the task(s) being observed including the SOP identification, who performed the task and the date. The auditor will also include any notes concerning the observation.

- (a) Due to the variation in tasks among disciplines it is expected that for some units an auditor may be able to observe a complete process with an analyst while for other disciplines only partial processes may be captured under direct observation.
- (b) The QM will track what tasks have been observed in each discipline, who was observed and what categories of testing are included during each audit. The goal will be to observe:
  - (i) Different tasks and analysts during the annual audits within 1 accreditation cycle for each discipline.
  - (ii) Tasks from multiple categories of testing in each discipline within 1 accreditation cycle.
- (c) If based on the observations, questions of conformity to Unit SOPs arise the QM will work with the AD or DD of the Unit to determine if the questions are founded and require follow-up.

## 2. External Assessments:

- a. For the Division of Scientific Services:
  - i. ANAB will perform surveillance visits and a full assessment based on the criteria of the ANAB accreditation program requirements (ISO/IEC: 17025 and the ANAB AR3125 Accreditation Requirements). These assessments will be performed by assessors designated by ANAB.
  - ii. If non-conformities are identified during any assessment or surveillance visit the QM will work with Key Management to address the issues and satisfy the requirements of the DSS Management System and ANAB.
- 3. DNA Unit: An audit/assessment of the DNA Unit will be performed annually, this may be either internal or external (refer to DNA Unit specific SOPs). This will meet the requirements of the FBI DNA QAS.
  - a. The DNA Unit (Casework and Database) will receive an external assessment once every two years (at minimum) to the respective FBI DNA QAS. The DNA Technical Leader and the FB/DNA Quality Assurance Manager will work together to ensure that the records needed for the external audit are provided per the requirements of the assessors. The DNA TL will work with Management to identify an appropriate external assessment team/organization based on the criteria of the FBI DNA QAS document; when possible this will be coordinated with the ANAB external assessment.
    - (a) Top Management may choose to require external assessments more frequently based on the needs of the DSS.
    - (b) The DNA TL (or designee) will maintain the original assessment documents for a period of no less than 10 years. The DNA TL may designate the Quality Section as the keeper of the original audit documentation. The TL will review and document the review of the external assessment documents and if applicable, approve corrective actions.
  - i. When an internal audit of the DNA Unit (Casework and Database) is to be performed, the DNA TL is responsible to direct the performance of the audit. At minimum, an internal DNA Unit audit will be performed in years that no External DNA Unit audit is performed. Where allowed by the FBI DNA QAS, the TL can utilize employees trained in the DNA QAS audit process to perform the audit; other audit trained individuals can be used for specific audit tasks if required by the TL.
    - (a) The audit will include a review of all Unit SOPs and all work instructions.
    - (c) To document the audit, the current FBI DNA QAS audit document will be completed by the TL (or designee). The TL will review and document the review of the internal audit documents and if applicable, approve corrective actions.
    - (b) Upon completion of the audit the TL, Quality Section and others as appropriate will review the audit; if necessary they will meet to review remediation.

*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro*

- (c) The DNA TL (or designee) will maintain the original audit documents for a period of no less than 10 years. The DNA TL may designate the Quality Section as the keeper of the original audit documentation.
- ii. If issues are identified during an audit (internal or external) the Technical Leader will work with the Quality Section to satisfy the requirements of the audit. Any issues that are identified that demonstrate non-compliance to a specific criteria will require documentation using the QAR process. The Director and QM and/or FB/DNA QM will be informed of all remediation that are required when they are discovered.
4. Audits of Reference Collections and Evidence Receiving:
- a. **Controlled Substances:** The Controlled Substance Unit maintains a collection of drug standards for use as reference materials. These are maintained in a safe and a locked refrigerator within the section. An audit of the drug standards will be performed every year. This audit will be performed by 2 individuals working as witnesses for each other. The audit will be performed so that one analyst from the Controlled Substance Unit and one employee from another Unit perform the audit. This audit is to ensure that all substances are accounted for, at the expected quantity. The audit guidelines for this are outlined in SOP CS-11 'Storage and Use of Controlled Substance Standards'. Results of the audit will be reported to the Manager of the Unit and to the Quality Manager. Documentation of this audit will be maintained for no less than 10 years by the Quality Section. If remediation is required the QM will work with the DD (or their designee) to address the issues. Note that to maintain a Federal Drug license an audit is required every two years, however, laboratory Management requires this to be performed annually.
- b. **Firearms:** The Firearms Unit maintains a collection of firearms. This reference collection will be audited every year to account for all the firearms in the collection. The Firearms Unit maintains a database for the Firearms collection. This audit will be performed by 2 individuals working as witnesses for each other. Documentation of each audit will be maintained by the Unit for no less than 10 years. The audit will be arranged so that one analyst from the Firearms Unit and one employee from another Unit perform the audit. The Unit Lead will report the outcome of the audit to the Deputy Director through email or memo. Any identified issues will be investigated and documented accordingly. A copy of the audit findings will be forwarded to the Quality Section for storage.
- c. **Evidence Receiving Storage:** Evidence stored in the Evidence Receiving storage area will be audited every year. This will minimally include the incoming and outgoing evidence storage areas. This will be performed by 2 individuals working as witnesses for each other. The audit will be arranged so that one ECO and a second employee from a separate unit or 2 employees not assigned to ER will perform the audit. Any identified issues will be investigated and documented accordingly. Results of the audit will be reported to the Manager of the Unit and the Quality Manager. Documentation of the audit will be maintained by the Quality Section for no less than 10 years.

**D. REFERENCES:**

1. ANAB AR3125 'Forensic Testing and Calibration Laboratories Accreditation Requirements'
2. ISO/IEC 17025:2005
3. DNA Quality Assurance Standards
4. ATF Minimum Required Operating Standards Audit for National Integrated Ballistic Information Network Sites

ARCHIVED