

*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro***A. Purpose**

- a. To provide a new examiner with the capabilities to conduct competent examinations of firearm and toolmark evidence, to render opinions relating to the examinations, and to provide expert witness testimony in a professional and unbiased manner.
- b. To provide guidance for a new examiner with prior firearms examination experience.
- c. To provide National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) technicians with the appropriate training to conduct acquisitions and correlation review of test fired and evidence cartridge cases.
- d. For current examiners, to stay abreast of new technology, current legal trends, and the latest research developments relevant to the discipline of firearm and toolmark examination.

B. Responsibility

Assigned Unit staff

C. Procedure

- a. New examiners shall follow the Connecticut Division of Scientific Services Firearm and Toolmark Unit Training Manual (QR FA-15) and complete the New Examiner Achievement Record (QR FA-15-1).
 - i. This training manual is composed of twelve modules. New examiners will complete each module as assigned by the Unit lead. The modules do not need to be completed in numerical order, and some modules may be skipped based on the operational needs of the Division. They may be addressed at a later time.
 - ii. This training may be supplemented by the training modules on the National Forensic Science Training Center (NFSTC) website.
 - iii. Acceptance into the ATF's National Firearms Examiner Academy (NFEA) may replace parts of the DSS Firearm and Toolmark Unit Training Manual.
 - 1. Any new examiner accepted into this program is still responsible for completing DSS-specific modules within the Firearm and Toolmark Unit Training Manual (e.g. Orientation, Safety, Evidence Handling).
 - 2. Any new examiner accepted into this program is also responsible for reading all DSS standard operating procedures relating to the Firearms Unit and to the laboratory as a whole.

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- iv. Training for new examiners may also be provided via a contractual service with a qualified trainer. In this circumstance, the qualifications of the trainer will be reviewed by the technical responsibility, Deputy Director and Director. The trainer will provide a training program as to the topic areas that will be covered. At a minimum, these topic areas should cover the similar areas as listed in the Unit Training Manual.
- v. Upon completion of training, the training files are provided to the Quality Manager for review prior to providing a competency test. Once reviewed and found acceptable, new examiners shall be competency tested in the appropriate categories of testing prior to beginning independent casework. This is to evaluate their analytical skills and their ability to clearly communicate their findings in a report. The competency testing shall include an oral or written evaluation of the areas tested with the competency test. Refer to GL-14 on grading parameters for tests issued during the training process.

The competency testing shall include a revolver and a handgun for the appropriate categories of testing.
- vi. A memo shall be written to the Deputy Director stating that the analyst has successfully completed their training and passed the competency test.
 - 1. The Deputy Director may review the training files or simply endorse the memo and generate a workflow request in Qualtrax requesting that the new examiner be authorized to conduct work in the specified categories of testing. Supporting documents may be appended to this workflow.
- vii. The new examiner's trainer or the Unit's technical responsibility/designee will be his/her verifier/technical reviewer of casework for a period of six (6) months. At the end of this period, the new examiner's work will be evaluated prior to other examiners in the Unit performing any verifications/technical reviews for the new examiner.
- viii. The new examiner may conduct verifications/technical reviews of others' casework in a category of testing after a period of six (6) months and a sufficient number of cases of their own independent casework in that category of testing.
 - 1. Once the examiner has completed the evaluation period, a memo shall be written to the Deputy Director stating the examiner has successfully completed the evaluation period and has been deemed competent to conduct technical reviews and verifications in that category of testing.
 - 2. The Deputy Director, after review, may endorse the memo and generate a workflow request in Qualtrax requesting that the examiner be authorized

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to conduct technical reviews and verifications based upon the examiner's casework experience in the specified categories of testing. Supporting documents may be appended to this workflow.

- b. New examiners with prior experience shall review all General Laboratory SOPs and Unit-specific SOPs.
 - i. New examiners with prior experience shall be competency tested in the appropriate categories of testing prior to beginning independent casework.
- c. NIBIN technicians shall be trained in the operation of the Integrated Ballistics Information System (IBIS) equipment by an approved instructor and shall follow the appropriate training modules within the Firearm and Toolmark Unit Training Manual.
- d. New and current examiners shall attend training when possible to stay abreast of new topics within the forensic discipline. This can include conferences, presentations, armorer's schools, webinars, etc.
 - i. Any certificates of attendance attained for training courses shall be kept with the examiner or analyst and a copy uploaded to Qualtrax under the Personnel-Electronic Filing Cabinet.
 - ii. A printed copy shall be furnished to the Quality Assurance Unit for the examiner's professional development file.
- e. Remediation and Retraining
 - i. Refer to GL-14 for guidance when a deficiency has been identified.

D. References

- a. QR FA-15: Connecticut Division of Scientific Services Firearm and Toolmark Unit Training Manual
- b. QR FA-15-1: New Examiner Achievement Record
- c. National Forensic Science Training Center website (<http://projects.nfstc.org/firearms/>)
- d. General Laboratory SOP 14, General Training