

**QD SOP-4 Scope of Work of Forensic Document  
Examiners**

Document ID: 2204  
Revision: 1  
Effective Date: 1/4/2016  
Status: Published  
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*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro*

**Purpose:** Scope of Work of Forensic Document Examiners

This overview provides guidance regarding the duties of forensic document examiners, also referred to as Questioned document examiners and provides guidance to anyone analyzing forensic document examination.

**Responsibility:** Forensic Science Examiners assigned to the Questioned Document Units or performing casework in the Unit.

The Forensic Science Examiners assigned to this Unit make scientific examinations, comparisons, and analyses of documents in order to:

1. establish genuineness or non-genuineness, or to expose forgery, or to reveal alterations, additions, or deletions,
2. identify or eliminate persons as the source of handwriting,
3. identify or eliminate the source of typewriting or other impression, marks, or relative evidence,
4. write reports or give testimony, when needed, to aid the users of the examiner's services in understanding the examiner's findings.

Examiners in this field are sometimes known referred to by the term "handwriting experts." Forensic document examination includes expertise in handwriting identification. Handwriting includes cursive or script style writing, hand printing, signatures, numerals, and other written marks or signs.

Forensic document examination does not involve the employment of calligraphic or engrossing skills, nor does it involve a study of handwriting in an attempt to create a personality profile or otherwise analyze or judge the writer's personality or character.

**General Examination Overview:**

Forensic analysis about documents arise in business, finance, civil and criminal trials, or in any matter affected by the integrity of written communications and records. The DSS examines evidence related to criminal matters or investigations that may lead to criminal charges.

Forensic questioned document analysis generally encompasses the following:

1. The identification of handwriting and typewriting.
2. The identification or elimination of the source of and the output of other mechanical or electronic imaging devices such as printers, copying machines, facsimile equipment, and the like.
3. The identification or elimination of ink, paper, and writing instruments.

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4. The establishment of the date, source, history, sequence of preparation, alterations or additions to documents, and relationships of documents.
5. Other analysis may require the decipherment and sometimes the restoration, or both, of obscured, deleted, or damaged parts of documents.
6. The analysis may include a study of the information carried by a document for discovery of evidence of spuriousness, identification of persons, or to show significant relationships.
7. Document examination also includes the recognition and preservation of other relevant physical evidence that may be present on documents.

Questions about documents are answered through the application of knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education specific to forensic document examination as well as from a number of other fields, such as the physical sciences. The field of interest may include research into the manufacturing processes and the materials that go into the production of documents, as well as the methods, machines, instruments, and human agencies by which the parts of documents are formed or brought together.

**General Equipment Overview:**

Equipment used in forensic document examination includes: stereoscopes and other optical aids; photography, photo editing software and other imaging devices, a wide variety of imaging materials adaptable for use with a variety of lighting methods, including the use of the Visual Spectral Comparator (VSC) that involves the use of radiant energy in the ultraviolet, visible, infrared, and other regions of the electromagnetic spectrum; as well as the electrostatic detection apparatus (ESDA) or other devices for the detection, or visualization, or both of indentations and other features present in or on paper or similar substrata.

**Reporting of Results:**

The results of examinations are reported for use by the submitting agency as detailed in GL1 Section 5.10. These results may be later interpreted in the expert testimony/opinions, explaining the bases and reasons for the conclusions, which may be illustrated by the use of demonstrative evidence.

**Sources of Error:** Not applicable

**References:**

SWGDOC Standard for Scope of Work of Forensic Document Examiners ver. 2013-1