	<b>ANTH-003</b> <b>Analytical Notes, Documentation, and Reports</b>	Forensic Anthropology
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**RELEASED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE  
FIRST DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER**

**1. Policy**

The OCME Forensic Anthropology Unit (FAU) shall record and maintain case analytical notes, administrative documents, supporting documentation, and finalized reports in a way to ensure their integrity and authenticity.

**2. Scope**

This SOP applies to all handwritten analytical notes, handwritten administrative documents, computer-generated supporting case documents, and reports. The procedures outlined apply to all FAU personnel.

**3. Definitions**

Case File: A case file is a consolidated file or folder containing the analytical notes, final reports, and administrative documentation received or generated by the FAU for a particular case.

Analytical Notes: Any documentation created by the FAU that pertains to the examination of the submitted remains is considered analytical notes. All documentation included in the case file must be labeled with the unique case number. Analytical notes must also contain the analyst's name or initials and the date(s) of analysis. Documentation considered analytical notes includes, but is not limited to:


- Laboratory notes, including diagrams, and drawings
- Annotated photographs relevant to the case
- Supporting documents.

Supporting Documents: Supporting documents are considered part of the analytical notes and include printouts that are generated during case examination that are considered pertinent to the analysis (e.g., FORDISC printouts for ancestry/population affinity and/or stature estimation).

Administrative Documents: Administrative documents include FAU documentation, such as Basic Case Information, Peer-Review, Release forms, Sampling/Reproduction Logs, and Court Testimony Forms, etc.

Non-FAU Documents: Non-FAU documents, such as copies of external reports and external information, are not part of the FAU analytical documentation. All Non-FAU documents are not part of the official case folder but should still contain the unique case number.


Anthropology Report: An Anthropology Report is the official document summarizing analytical findings.

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Electronic Case Documentation: Electronic documents associated with a particular case, which aid in analysis, are considered electronic case documentation. Some case documents are maintained in electronic form with or without maintaining a hard copy version in the case file. For example, photographs taken at a scene or during laboratory analysis are stored in their respective electronic case files (identified by their unique case number) on the Anthropology network drive.

#### 4. Procedure

- 4.1 **Timeliness in Recording:** To prevent the loss of information, observations or data obtained during the inspection shall be recorded in a timely manner. Date(s) on the analytical notes should reflect the date on which the observations, data, tests, and/or calculations relevant to a case were recorded by the analyst, except for instances of exigent circumstances (see ANTH-005: Scene Search and Recovery clause 6.1).
- 4.2 **Recording Media:** All handwritten laboratory notes, including any diagrams and/or drawings, shall be written/drawn in permanent ink.
- 4.3 **Legibility:** The analyst's handwritten analytical notes must be legible. If the technical reviewer deems the analytical notes illegible, then the notes will be returned to the analyst to be rewritten.
- 4.4 **Use of Abbreviations and Symbols:** When abbreviations or symbols are used in analytical notes and reports, the meaning of the abbreviation or symbol should be clearly documented or referenced. See Appendix A for a list of the abbreviations most commonly used by the FAU.
- 4.5 **Pagination:** All analytical notes and case documentation must display a page number and total page count (i.e., \_\_\_ of \_\_\_). Pagination for analytical notes and supporting documentation can be combined and sequentially numbered, or individual tests/analytical sections can be numbered separately.
- 4.6 **Analytical Notes Forms:** All observations, results, and interpretations associated with official case work are recorded on appropriate forms and/or diagrams.
  - 4.6.1 **Controlled Forms:** The FAU has created controlled forms to use in recording analytical notes. The analyst shall choose the appropriate form(s) for recording their notes based on the scope of the analysis requested.
    - **Form Control:** All FAU analytical notes forms are controlled by maintaining the most up-to-date version of the forms on the secure Anthropology network

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drive. Forms approved for use are saved in PDF format and display the date of the most current version. **Analysts should always use the most up-to-date version of the forms.**

- Editing/Replacing Forms: If a form requires editing or is replaced by a new form then the older electronic version is moved to an archive folder and the hard copies are removed from circulation. The FAU needs to be in agreement before controlled forms are edited or replaced.

4.6.2 **Uncontrolled Forms:** Analysts are allowed to use uncontrolled diagram forms as part of their analytical notes. There are instances when an analyst may need to create a new diagram of a particular region of the skeleton or skeletal element to document trauma, pathology, or a developmental anomaly. Uncontrolled diagram forms do not need the approval of the FAU for use and shall be maintained separate from the controlled forms on the Anthropology network drive.

4.7 In addition to recording observations, data, tests, and calculations in the analytical notes, the analyst(s) should record the following, when applicable:


4.7.1 **Unit(s) of Measurement:** The unit(s) of measurement (e.g., millimeters) shall always be indicated in the analytical notes.

- Instrumentation: The analyst shall document the unique inventory number associated with testing equipment used to take measurements.
- For microscope photographs, the analyst shall ensure the digital scale and magnification settings are accurate. Additionally, the magnification setting should be included in the file name.


4.7.2 **Methods and Reference Standards:** Methods and reference standards used during analysis should be documented when applicable. This includes documenting the scoring system used for the method (e.g., phase for pubic symphysis) and any relevant statistics.

- The analyst shall document the unique inventory number for each set of pubic symphyses and/or sternal rib end casts that were used for age estimation.

4.7.3 If skeletal fragments are reconstructed for the purpose of analysis and/or photography, the analyst should note which skeletal elements were reconstructed.

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- 4.7.4 The analyst shall document when samples are taken from remains and submitted to another internal department or external agency for additional analyses (see ANTH-001 Evidence Security and Management, section 7.2 Sample Submission).
- 4.8 **Corrections to Analytical Notes:** Any correction(s) to handwritten notes, prior to finalization of the case, should be made by placing a line through the undesired text and entering the correction and the analyst's initials. Corrections made on a different date from the original handwritten notes should also include the date the correction was made. Masking agents, such as whiteout and correction tape, should never be used to correct analytical notes. If additional space is needed for a correction, the analyst can either rewrite the analytical notes page with the corrections or include a supplemental notes page to describe the correction.
- 4.9 **Use of Original Documents:** The analyst(s) should avoid writing on original documents (e.g., medical or dental records) and instead, should work from a copy. All copies should be plainly marked as a copy.
- 4.10 **Photographic Documentation:** All remains submitted to the FAU for analysis should be photographed upon initial receipt. There may be instances where photographs taken during autopsy by OCME's Forensic Photographers are sufficient to document the in-take of remains and additional photos by FAU personnel are not required (see ANTH-001 Evidence Security and Management, clause 7.3.2.3). During examination, the analyst may decide to take additional photographs to support their observations and interpretations documented in the analytical notes. Photographs should include a scale, when practicable.
- 4.11 **Anthropology Reports:** The Anthropology Report, generated by the FAU provides clear documentation and interpretation of the anthropological findings. Each report is tailored to the type of consult requested (e.g., trauma analysis, biological profile, human vs. non-human).
- 4.11.1 All Anthropology Reports regardless of the type of analysis requested shall:
- Be written on NYC OCME letterhead.
  - List the unique case number at the top of the report and on the top of each subsequent page.
  - Include the date(s) of inspection. Date(s) of inspection begin on the date the remains are received by the FAU and end on the date the authoring analyst signs the finalized anthropology report.
  - Indicate which specimens were submitted for analysis.
  - Report out the analytical results.
  - Include the reason(s) for inconclusive results, when applicable.

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- Include the appropriate confidence interval or range based on the method used, when applicable.
- Include a signature block for the analyst(s) with the date of signature.

4.11.2 There are several report formats used depending on the type of analysis requested and performed (e.g., human/non-human, trauma, biological profile). A generalized report template can be found on the Anthropology network drive. Regardless of the type of analysis, reports will include a background section and details of the anthropological findings. While other reports may be variable depending on the type of analysis, a full skeletal analysis report has a more specific format. When applicable, the full skeletal report should contain the following sections:


- A “Background” section.
- A “Summary Table” that summarizes the analytical findings, when applicable. In some cases, a comparison table may be more appropriate.
- A section labeled “Inventory/Minimum Number of Individuals” that provides a statement documenting the MNI and the list of recovered or non-recovered elements.
- Sections for each portion of the biological profile (Sex, Age, Ancestry/Population Affinity, and Stature).
- A section labeled “Trauma Analysis” which may include descriptions of antemortem and/or perimortem trauma.
- A section labeled “General Observations” which may include the descriptions of other pertinent information relevant to the case.
- A final “Summary” section.

4.12 **Authentication:** Analytical notes and finalized anthropology reports are discoverable by legal authorities and thus need to be authentic. False, deceptive, or otherwise intentionally misleading statements, regardless of the nature and context are never acceptable.

4.12.1 An analyst shall authenticate their notes by annotating each page with the unique case number, analyst name or initials, examination date(s), and page number(s). To avoid issues with demonstrating authenticity of analytical notes:

- Do not write on the original copies of other analysts’ notes.
- Do not sign analytical notes you did not prepare.

4.12.2 The analyst authenticates their finalized anthropology report through a digital signature which includes a timestamp. In some instances, the Forensic Anthropology Director (Director) or the Forensic Anthropology Assistant Director may digitally sign for the case analyst if he/she is unavailable.

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4.13 **Peer-Review of Anthropology Reports and Analytical Notes:** When a draft anthropology report is ready for review, both the report and the case file are submitted for Peer Review (see ANTH-004 Peer Review).

4.14 **Case Finalization:** A case is considered finalized once the anthropology report and analytical notes have successfully gone through the peer-review process, the final anthropology report is digitally signed, and the report, analytical notes, and photographs are uploaded to the OCME Case Management System (CMS) and to their respective electronic case file located on the Anthropology network drive. A copy of the final report is maintained in the case file and clearly marked as “Copy”. The hard copy case file shall be retained in one of the Anthropology locked and secure laboratories (see ANTH-001 Evidence Security and Management).

Note: The Anthropology Report date of issue shall be the date the final report is digitally signed by the case analyst.

4.14.1 If the anthropology report uploaded to CMS is of forensic significance, then a computer-generated email is sent to the assigned Medical Examiner informing them that the report has been completed and available to view.


4.15 **Amendments:** Any revisions to a finalized report and/or the analytical notes are done through amendments. Administrative documents added to the case file after completion of the case report are not considered amendments.

4.15.1 **Amending Analytical Notes:** Changes can be made directly on the original analytical notes or by using a separate analytical notes form. If amended changes are done directly on the original analytical notes, then the date in which the amendment was made is required next to the changes.

4.15.2 **Amending Reports:** Amending the report requires that the analyst explain the amended changes in the appropriate section(s) of the report or at the end of the report as a summary statement. The amended section(s) of the report shall be clearly marked. Additionally, the amended report shall be clearly marked as such.

4.15.3 The amended analytical notes and report shall be saved into the electronic case file with the word “Amended” added to the title of the documents.

4.16 **Supplemental Reports:** Any additional anthropological analyses completed after the Anthropology Report has been finalized and signed, shall be documented in a Supplemental Report. The Supplemental Report shall be clearly marked as such.

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- 4.17 **Release of Information:** Finalized case file documents will not be released, whole or in part, to agencies outside of the OCME without the consent of the OCME Legal Department. Only documents in the case file generated by the FAU shall be included. All requests for information in this regard will be directed to the OCME Legal Department.


## Appendix A. List of commonly used abbreviations

### OCME Terms:

IDI: Identification Investigator  
FA: Forensic Anthropologist  
Director: Forensic Anthropology Director  
ME: Medical Examiner  
MLI: Medicolegal Investigator  
TC: Tour Commander  
METT: Medical Examiner Transportation Team

### Directional and Anatomical Terms:

Ant: Anterior  
Post: Posterior  
Lat: Lateral  
Med: Medial  
Sup: Superior  
Inf: Inferior  
Prox: Proximal

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FAU: Forensic Anthropology Unit  
FBio: Forensic Biology Department  
Histo: Histology Department  
CMS: Case Management System  
FACTS: Forensic Anthropology Case Tracking System  
K9: Canine Unit

**NYC Agency Terms:**

NYPD: New York Police Department  
CSU: Crime Scene Unit  
FDNY: Fire Department New York  
OEM: Office of Emergency Management  
DOC: Department of Correction  
LPC: Landmarks Preservation Commission  
ESU: Emergency Services Unit

Endo: Endocranial  
Ecto: Ectocranial  
L: Left  
R: Right  
C: Cervical  
T: Thoracic  
L: Lumbar  
S: Sacral  
V: Vertebra  
SAF: Superior Articular Facet  
IAF: Inferior Articular Facet  
TP: Transverse Process  
SP: Spinous Process  
ST: Soft Tissue  
FX: Fracture  
SFT: Sharp Force Trauma  
BFT: Blunt Force Trauma  
KSW: Knife Stab Wound  
KCW: Knife Cut Wound  
MNI: Minimum Number of Individuals  
PX: Postmortem  
AX: Antemortem  
PMI: Postmortem Interval