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Approved by: Forensic Anthropology Director		Effective Date: 14 March 2022

1. Policy

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

2. Scope

This SOP applies to all handwritten analytical notes, 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 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 and/or stature estimation.

Administrative Documents: Administrative documents include additional FAU documentation, such as Basic Case Information, Peer Review, Release Forms, Sampling/Casting 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.

Formal Anthropology Report: A Formal Anthropology Report is the official document summarizing the analytical findings.

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

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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:** 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.
- 4.2 **Recording Media:** All handwritten laboratory notes shall be written 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 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 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

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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 cases 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.
- 4.7.3 The analyst should document in the analytical notes if samples were taken from remains and submitted to another internal department or external agency for additional analyses (e.g., bone sample for DNA analysis), by filling out a Sampling and Casting Log (see ANTH-001 Evidence Security and Management). This log should be kept in the case file.

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- 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. Marking 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 revisit 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 intake of remains and additional photos by FAU personnel are not required (see ANTH-001 Evidence Security and Management, clause 7.4.1.3). During examination, the analyst may decide to take additional photographs to support their observations and interpretations documented in the analytical notes. All photographs should be in focus and include a scale, when practicable.
- 4.11 **Formal 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). All formal Anthropology Reports shall be submitted to the Records Department upon completion.
- 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 normally 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.
 - 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.

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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 formal 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 Profile” 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, 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 **No Formal Report:** There are cases where an anthropological opinion is requested, but no specimen is retained, or formal report written. In these instances, the anthropologist reports their opinion verbally or through email to the medical examiner or requesting individual. These consultations are documented with an internal form within a case file.

4.13 **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.

4.13.1 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.

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- 4.13.2 The analyst authenticates their finalized anthropology report by dating and signing the report. In some instances, the Forensic Anthropology Director (Director) may sign for the case analyst if he/she is unavailable. The Director will further authenticate the report by stamping it “Original” before sending it to the Records Department.
- 4.14 **Peer Review of Anthropology Reports and Analytical Notes:** When a draft anthropology report is ready for review, both the report and all analytical notes are submitted for Technical and Administrative Peer-Review (see ANTH-004 Peer Review).
- 4.15 **Case Finalization:** A case is considered finalized once the anthropology report and analytical notes have successfully gone through the peer-review process and a signed and dated final anthropology report is submitted to the Records Department and uploaded to CMS. The Anthropology Report date of issue shall be the date the final report is signed by the case analyst. A separate copy of the final report is maintained in the FAU case file and clearly marked as “Copy”. Additionally, the report and analytical notes are scanned as PDFs and uploaded to the electronic case file, located on the Anthropology network drive. A hard copy version of the case file shall be retained in one of the Anthropology locked and secure laboratories (see ANTH-002 Evidence Security and Management).
- 4.16 **Amendments:** Any revisions that impact the reported conclusions in 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 and minor editorial revisions that do not impact the analytical conclusions are not considered amendments.
- 4.16.1 **Amending Analytical Notes:** Changes can be made directly on the original analytical notes or by using a separate 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.
- 4.16.2 **Amending Reports:** Amending the report requires that the analyst explain the amended changes in the appropriate section(s) of the report. The amended portions shall be clearly marked. The amended report shall be clearly marked as such.
- 4.16.3 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.
- 4.17 **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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4.18 **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.

4.19 **Disposition:** Analytical notes, test reports, and other case records should be kept together in the FAU Case File (see ANTH-001 Evidence Security and Management).

4.20 **Summary:** Case records are peer-reviewed in accordance with ANTH-004 Peer Review. The entire case file will be made available to the technical reviewer at the time of review. Case records are subject to internal audits in accordance with QM-007: Internal Audits.

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

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

Directional and Anatomical Terms:

Ant: Anterior
 Post: Posterior
 Lat: Lateral
 Med: Medial

Sup: Superior
 Inf: Inferior
 Prox: Proximal
 Endo: Endocranial
 Ecto: Ectocranial
 L: Left
 R: Right
 C: Cervical
 T: Thoracic
 L: Lumbar
 S: Sacral
 V: Vertebral
 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

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Revision History

REV #	DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
0	26 January 2018	New document.
1	12 June 2018	Added Appendix A. Common Abbreviations Corrected error in Revision #: 26 January 2018 should have been 0 instead of 1. Fixed several grammar errors and spacing issues
2	15 October 2018	Added a statement in 4.1.5: The Anthropology Report date of issue shall be the date the final report is signed by the case analyst.
3	21 November 2018	Added the following statement to 4.11.1: Include the date(s) of inspection. Date(s) of inspection normally begin on the date the remains are received by the FAU and end on the date the authoring analyst signs the finalized anthropology report.
4	23 October	Added the following bullet points to 4.11.1 to address ANAB AR 3120 subclause 4.2.1 (cond e). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include the reason(s) for inconclusive results, when applicable. • Include the appropriate confidence interval or range based on the method used, when applicable.
5	1 March 2021	Clause 4.16 was updated to clarify that only changes to finalized report and/or analytical methods that impact reported conclusions are subject to amendment. An amended report is not required for minor editorial changes.
6	14 March 2022	Updated the two bullet point statements in clause 4.7.1 for better clarification of FAU procedure.