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Title: Peer Review		Control No. ANTH-004	Revision: 1
Approved by: Forensic Anthropology Director		Effective Date: 26 January 2018	

1. Policy

All OCME FAU casework will be subject to a peer review process to ensure that anthropological analyses and reported findings meet an acceptable and recognized scientific standard.

2. Scope

The procedures outlined below apply to all FAU personnel who perform anthropological analyses, generate official reports, and participate in the peer review process.

3. Definitions

Technical Review: A technical review refers to an evaluation of the case file documentation to ensure that there is an acceptable scientific basis for the conclusions offered in the anthropology report. Only competency and proficiency tested FAU analysts may serve as Technical Reviewers.

Administrative Review: An administrative review is the final evaluation of the case report and case file documentation to ensure that the analysis and case documentation is complete and complies with the OCME FAU laboratory policies and practices outlined in the relevant standard operating procedures. Only competency and proficiency tested FAU analysts may serve as Technical Reviewers.

4. Peer Review Procedure

All analytical notes, supporting documentation, and anthropology working draft reports are subject to the peer review process prior to case finalization (see ANTH-003 Analytical Notes, Documentation and Reports). The peer review process consists of a technical review and an administrative review. The intent of the peer review process is to verify that:

- The methods used and conclusions reported are considered acceptable with current scientific standards.
- The reported conclusions are supported by the case documentation (i.e., analytical notes and supporting documents).
- The anthropology working draft report is written in a clear and professional manner.
- The analytical notes and anthropology working draft reports are SOP compliant.

4.1 **Technical Review**: The report author shall submit the case file to another FAU analyst for technical review. The Director shall ensure that technical review requests are equitably distributed among FAU analysts. If possible, the analyst assigned as technical reviewer should not have any prior involvement in the analysis of the case.

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4.1.1 At a minimum, the technical reviewer shall evaluate the anthropology working draft report, analytical notes, and supporting documentation to determine if:

- The appropriate analyses (i.e., methods and techniques) have been performed and applied correctly.
- Measurements taken are complete and accurate.
- Calculations and statistical findings from approved software are complete, accurate, and appropriately reported.
- All relevant findings have been documented in the analytical notes and working draft report.
- The analysts' conclusions fall within the scope of the discipline/category of testing.
- The anthropology working draft report is accurate and consistent with what is documented in the analytical notes and supporting documentation and demonstrates sufficient scientific support for the results and/or conclusions.

4.1.2 All working draft reports should be clearly marked as drafts.

Note: Anthropology working drafts reports are not considered part of the case file and are not retained after completion of the peer review process.

4.1.3. Upon completion of the technical review, the reviewer shall sign and date the Technical Review section of the Peer Review Form and return the case folder to the analyst. For a non-concurrence see section 5.2. The case analyst shall make sure a copy of the most current working draft report is forwarded to another FAU analyst for an administrative review.

4.2 **Administrative Review:** A FAU analyst shall be assigned to administratively review the case records. The Director shall ensure that administrative review requests are equitably distributed among FAU analysts.

4.2.1 The administrative reviewer shall examine the most current working draft report, analytical notes, and supporting documentation to determine if:

- The working draft report is written in a clear and professional manner.
- The working draft report and associated analytical notes are complete.
- Names and dates are accurate.

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- The working draft report conforms to the proper report formatting and requirements.
- The case documents conform to ANTH-003: Analytical Notes, Documentation, and Reports.
- A technical review has been completed and properly documented.

4.2.2 Upon completion of the administrative review, the assigned administrative reviewer shall sign and date the Administrative Review section of the Peer Review Form (FAU-PR) and return the completed case file to the report author(s) for report finalization.

4.2.3 Once the report has been finalized, the case analyst shall print and sign two copies of the report and turn over the completed case file to the Director or designee will sign for final approval. The Director will complete and sign the Recommended Disposition of Skeletal Remains section of the Peer Review Form.

5. Conflict Resolution

5.1 **Referral:** During the peer review process the technical and administrative reviews will bring any errors, disagreements and/or suggested edits to the attention of the case analyst either verbally and/or in written communication. The analyst and peer reviewer(s) shall discuss all concerns and come to an agreed upon resolution. If an agreement cannot be reached between the peer reviewer(s) and the author(s) the issue is referred to another FAU staff member for an independent evaluation.

5.1.1 Reasons for Referral: Minor formatting issues, typographical errors, issues related to writing style are typically not grounds for referral. Typical disagreements leading to a referral may include, but are not limited to:

- Methods, techniques, reasoning and/or conclusions are judged to be inaccurate, unsubstantiated, inappropriate or outside the standard of the applicable discipline.
- The case work exhibits substantial non-compliance with the current SOPs or other approved procedures.
- Reported conclusions are not supported by the analytical notes and supporting documentation.
- Ethical concerns or conflicts of interest are evident.

5.2 **Non-concurrence:** If the peer reviewer(s) and report author(s) are unable to resolve an issue and there is a non-concurrence, the matter shall be referred to an additional FAU analyst for review. If the matter cannot be resolved internally then the case will be

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referred to the Chief Medical Examiner (Chief) or Deputy Chief Medical Examiner (Deputy). The Chief or Deputy shall review the case documentation and decide whether to let the analyst sign the report as is or re-assign the case to another analyst. The Chief or Deputy can consult an external reviewer before making their final decision. The external reviewer should be a Forensic Anthropologist with technical expertise in the field.

5.2.1 A Non-Concurrence Form, which can be found on the Anthropology network drive, shall be filled out explaining the issue(s) that cannot be resolved between the peer reviewer(s) and report author(s). The completed Non-Concurrence Form and the entire case file including a current draft report shall be forwarded to the final reviewer.

6. **Documentation:** The current versions of the Peer Review Forms can be found on the Anthropology network drive. A Peer Review Form shall be completed by the technical and administrative reviewers for all official anthropology reports. Once completed, the form shall be maintained with the hard copy case file, as well as scanned and saved to the electronic case file (see ANTH-001 Evidence Security and Management).

7. **Revision History**

REV.	DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
1	26 January 2018	New document.