

NYC – OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER Forensic Anthropology Unit		Page: 1 of 4
Title: Peer Review	Control No. ANTH-004	Revision: 1
Approved by: Forensic Anthropology Director		Effective Date: 14 December 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 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 Administrative 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. Usually the technical and administrative reviews are completed by the same analyst. 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 **Peer Review**: The report author shall submit the case file to another FAU analyst for peer review. The Director shall ensure that peer review requests are equitably distributed among FAU analysts. If possible, the analyst assigned as reviewer should not have any prior involvement in the analysis of the case.

NYC – OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER Forensic Anthropology Unit		Page: 2 of 4
Title: Peer Review	Control No. ANTH-004	Revision: 1
Approved by: Forensic Anthropology Director		Effective Date: 14 December 2018

4.1.1 **Technical Review:** The assigned reviewer shall perform a technical review of the working draft report and case file documents. At a minimum, the technical review 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 analyst's 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 **Administrative Review:** At a minimum, the administrative review shall evaluate 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.
- The working draft report conforms to the proper report formatting and requirements.
- The case documents conform to ANTH-003: Analytical Notes, Documentation, and Reports.
- References are correctly cited and all sources are included in the text and reference section.

4.1.3 **Working Draft Reports:** All working draft reports should be unsigned and 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.

4.1.4 **Technical and Administrative Checklists:** The reviewer(s) shall follow the technical and administrative checklists on the Peer Review Form to ensure that

NYC – OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER Forensic Anthropology Unit		Page: 3 of 4
Title: Peer Review	Control No. ANTH-004	Revision: 1
Approved by: Forensic Anthropology Director		Effective Date: 14 December 2018

the pertinent information listed in 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 is checked prior to completion of the peer review process.

4.1.5 Upon completion of the technical and administrative reviews, the reviewer shall sign and date the Peer Review Form and return the case folder to the case analyst. The peer reviewer is responsible for indicating if they concur with the findings. If the reviewer does not agree with the findings and a non-concurrence occurs see section 5.2.

4.1.6 **Report Finalization:** The case analyst shall send the case file and most current version of the report to the Director or designee for approval. The report is considered finalized once the Director or designee signs the “Report Finalization” section of the Peer Review form and indicates recommended disposition of the remains. Once 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 for case finalization (see ANTH-003: Analytical Notes, Documentation and Reports, section 4.15).

5. Conflict Resolution

5.1 **Referral:** During the peer review process the peer reviewer 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 analyst 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 case analyst are unable to resolve an issue and there is a non-concurrence, the matter shall be referred to an additional FAU analyst

NYC – OFFICE OF CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER Forensic Anthropology Unit		Page: 4 of 4
Title: Peer Review	Control No. ANTH-004	Revision: 1
Approved by: Forensic Anthropology Director		Effective Date: 14 December 2018

for review. If the matter cannot be resolved internally then the case will be 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 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 additional reviewer(s).

6. Documentation: The current versions of the Peer Review and Nonconcurrency Forms can be found on the Anthropology network drive. A Peer Review Form shall be completed 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
0	26 January 2018	New document.
1	14 December 2018	Added the following statement to 4. "Usually the technical and administrative reviews are completed by the same analyst." Removed sections 4.2-4.2.3 and reworked section 4.1 – 4.1.6 to make the procedures reflect that the technical and administrative reviews are conducted by the same person (typically). Made a few minor editorial changes throughout the document.