RELEASED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE
FIRST DEPUTY CHIEF MEDICAL EXAMINER

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. FAU analysts may serve as a technical reviewer after they have successfully completed the FAU Competency tests and at least one performance monitoring activity (see QM-002: Performance Monitoring, clause 3).

   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. FAU analysts may serve as an administrative reviewer after they have successfully completed the FAU Competency tests and at least one performance monitoring activity (see QM-002: Performance Monitoring, clause 3).

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 clause 4.14). The peer review process consists of a technical review and an administrative review. The intent of the peer review process is to verify:

   - 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, supporting documents, and photographs).
   - The anthropology working draft report is written in a clear and professional manner.
   - The analytical notes and anthropology working draft report are SOP compliant.

4.1 **Initiating the peer review process**: The report author shall submit the case file, including a working draft report to another FAU analyst for peer review. If possible, the analyst assigned as reviewer should not have any prior involvement in the analysis of the case.

4.1.1 **Technical Review**: The assigned reviewer shall perform a technical review of the working draft report and all case file documents. At a minimum, the technical review shall evaluate the anthropology working draft report, analytical notes, photographs, and supporting documentation to determine if:

- The specimen/remains inventory is accurate and matches any photos or diagrams, when applicable.
- The appropriate analyses (i.e., methods and techniques) have been performed and applied correctly.
- Measurements taken and data transfers are complete and accurate.
- Calculations and statistical findings from approved software programs are complete, accurate, and appropriately reported.
- 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.

To indicate completion of the technical review, the reviewer shall sign and date the Peer Review form and indicate if they concur with the reported findings. If the reviewer does not agree with the analysts' findings and a non-concurrence occurs, see section 5.2.

4.1.1.1 **Director/Assistant Director Approval:** After completion of the technical review, the analyst shall submit the case file and the current working draft report to the FAU Director or Assistant Director for approval. The Director or Assistant Director shall sign and date the Peer Review form to indicate the case file and draft anthropology report is ready for administrative review and report finalization. Additionally, they will indicate the recommended disposition of the remains.

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.
- All relevant findings have been documented in the analytical notes and working draft report.
- The working draft report and associated analytical notes are complete and all relevant forms are included in the case file.

- 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 reference section.

4.1.3 **Working Draft Reports:** Anthropology working drafts reports are not considered part of the case file and are not retained after completion of the peer review process. All working draft reports should be unsigned and clearly marked as drafts.

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 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 **Report Finalization:** The report is considered finalized once the administrative review has been completed which is indicated by the administrative reviewer signing and dating the Peer Review form. Once finalized, the case analyst shall print, sign and date 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).

4.1.5.1 The Director or designee for case finalization shall complete the Case File Summary form indicating which documents are present in the case folder.

Note: If additional documents are added to the case folder after case finalization, the analyst adding the document is responsible for updating the Case File Summary form.

5. Conflict Resolution

5.1 **Referral**: During the peer review process the reviewer(s) 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 reviewer(s) shall discuss all concerns and come to an agreed upon resolution. If an agreement cannot be reached between the 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 casework 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 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 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 reassign 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 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 Nonconcurrence 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.