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Title: <b>Proficiency Testing</b>	Control No. QM-003	Revision: 1
Approved by: Forensic Anthropology Director		Effective Date: 30 December 2020

## 1. Policy

The Forensic Anthropology Unit (FAU) shall perform annual proficiency testing to verify that all personnel involved in anthropological analyses have maintained sufficient knowledge and skills to perform the tasks they are assigned.

## 2. Scope

This Quality Manual document applies to all FAU personnel that will be performing anthropological casework analysis.

## 3. Definitions

**Proficiency Testing:** Proficiency testing is an evaluation of participant performance against pre-established criteria by means of interlaboratory comparisons (AR3120:2020).

## 4. Proficiency Testing

Each FAU analyst must complete the proficiency test annually covering at least one component/parameter of the FAU Laboratory Scope of Accreditation.

Note: Proficiency tests are not required for non-routine procedures that are not outlined in the FAU's Standard Operating Procedures.

**4.1 Proficiency Monitoring Plan:** The Quality Assurance (QA) Specialist is responsible for creating and maintaining a 4-year proficiency monitoring plan that covers the current cycle of accreditation. The 4-year plan should include the annual proficiency tests and any additional monitoring activities deemed necessary to ensure inclusion of a representative sample of the components/parameters and equipment/techniques listed on the scope of accreditation.

**4.2 Proficiency Test Provider:** When available and deemed appropriate, the FAU shall use a proficiency test provider that is accredited to ISO/IEC 17043 and has applicable proficiency test(s) on its scope of accreditation (see AR3021:2020, clause 6.1.5.5). If an accredited proficiency test provider is not available, then the FAU shall seek approval from ANAB to use an alternate proficiency test provider.

**4.2.1 Alternate Proficiency Test Provider Approval:** The FAU shall fill out the appropriate section(s) of the ANAB Form "FM 3041: Proficiency Testing Alternative Approval" and submit the form with any supplemental documents (if needed) to [QualityMatters@anab.org](mailto:QualityMatters@anab.org) for review.

**4.3 Proficiency Test Format:** The format of the proficiency test and criteria for determining successful completion of the test may vary depending on which scope

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component/parameter is being covered. Prior to administering the test, all FAU staff will be informed of the test format and the criteria for successful completion.

- 4.4 **Administering a Proficiency Test:** The QA Specialist is responsible for scheduling the annual proficiency test for all FAU personnel. The QA Specialist shall give the FAU staff prior notice as to when the test will be administered.

The external proficiency test provider will either personally administer the test, or he/she will provide the QA Specialist with the test questions and any associated instructions. The proficiency test will be administered in a way to ensure that the results are not known or readily available to the FAU staff prior to completion of the test.

- 4.5 **Taking a Proficiency Test:** FAU staff shall record their answers directly on the test provided (electronic or hardcopy) or on the appropriate analytical notes form(s). For example, if the proficiency test is covering age estimation then the FAU age estimation form may be used for recording answers.

The examinee may consult the FAU Standard Operating Procedures, written notes, and other appropriate references and reference materials during examination. Appropriate references and reference materials are those that would typically be available when performing the analytical tasks. The analyst may not get assistance from other personnel during the test.

- 4.6 **Grading Proficiency Tests:** The proficiency test shall be graded by the external proficiency test provider or the OCME Quality Director. If the external proficiency test provider is not available to grade the tests, then he/she will supply an answer key and instructions for grading to the OCME Quality Director. The proficiency test will be graded as pass/fail.

Note: Some proficiency tests will assess the individual's anthropological/analytical skills and assess their adherence to the FAU laboratory procedures. When the proficiency test involves both areas of assessment, analytical skills and adherence to FAU laboratory procedures will be graded separately.

- 4.6.1 **Passing Grade:** To receive a passing grade, all the criteria for successful completion of the proficiency test must be met. The criteria for successful completion of the proficiency test must be clearly defined and stated to the FAU staff prior to taking the test.

- 4.6.2 **Failing Grade:** FAU staff shall receive a failing grade if criteria for successful completion have not been met.

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Failing a proficiency test does not necessarily mean the analyst is not proficient in the scope component/parameter (e.g., issue with proficiency test question(s), issue with FAU SOP). The FAU Director will determine if the analyst can retake the test if remedial training is required. If remedial training is **not** deemed necessary, then the Director will document the reason(s) and include it with the proficiency test results.

If the Director fails the proficiency test, then the Deputy Chief Medical Examiner (Deputy Chief) will determine if remedial training is needed. The Deputy Chief's decision will be recorded and kept with the proficiency test results.

Remedial training may include review of specific SOPS, analytical methods, and proper use of testing equipment/software. After the analyst has completed the required remedial training, he/she may be required to retake the proficiency test, if appropriate. Instructions for remedial training and date of completion will be documented and kept with the proficiency test results.

4.7 **Documentation:** Proficiency test records shall be retained for a minimum of one complete accreditation cycle. The QA Specialist is responsible for maintaining the appropriate documentation for all proficiency tests in each employee's personnel binder. The following information should be retained, when appropriate:

- Examinee's name.
- Date of proficiency test.
- Name of proficiency test provider.
- Name of test grader.
- Original or copies of data and notes that support the conclusions.
- Indication of pass/fail.
- Feedback from the proficiency test provider.
- Documentation for re-taking the proficiency test, if required.
- Remedial training documentation (whether or not remedial training is needed), or corrective actions taken, if required.

Additionally, the QA Specialist shall maintain an up-to-date electronic database for all proficiency test records. This database will allow the QA Specialist to schedule future proficiency tests.

## 5. References:

AR 3120: 2020, ANAB Accreditation Requirements Forensic Inspection.

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6. Revision History

Rev	DATE	SUMMARY OF CHANGES
	29 January 2018	New document.
1	30 December 2020	This document has been significantly updated to cover all requirements from ANAB document AR3120 and to address the FAU changes to the procedures for failing a proficiency test. Nearly all clauses in this SOP have been updated (3.-5.).

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