



## **Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science**

### **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL REVIEW PANELS**

This document sets out the framework within which Scientific and Technical Review Panels (STRPs) shall operate and outlines the authority, composition, terms of service, tasks, and practical rules for these panels. In addition to these Terms of Reference, STRPs shall adhere to the *OSAC Charter and Bylaws*.

#### **1. Purpose**

Scientific and Technical Review Panels shall provide critical and knowledgeable reviews of draft standards or of proposed revisions of standards previously published by standards developing organizations (SDOs). Each STRP prepares a draft report for the authoring Subcommittee (SC) or Interdisciplinary Committee (IC). After the SC or IC has had an opportunity to respond to the draft report, the STRP issues a final report, accounting for any SC or IC responses or revisions to the standard. The standard and the STRP final report are published to provide an opportunity for members of OSAC and the general public to comment on the draft standard.

#### **2. Scope**

2.1) To be placed on the OSAC Registry, certain types of standards first must be reviewed by an STRP. Standards covering the following topics are subject to STRP review:

- 2.1.1) Method development
- 2.1.2) Method validation
- 2.1.3) Methods, practices and procedures
- 2.1.4) Quality assurance
- 2.1.5) Reports and testimony

2.2) Normally, an STRP reviews a single standard and terminates when it submits its final report. However, when more than one standard is proposed for aspects of the same topic

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single STRP may be appointed to review all of them. In all cases, the STRP will issue one report per standard.

### 3. Membership Requirements

3.1) To be eligible to be a STRP member, interested parties must submit an OSAC application.

3.2) STRP members may be OSAC members or affiliates, but participation on a STRP does not constitute OSAC membership.

3.3) STRP members shall include subject matter experts from both the forensic science community and from the broader scientific community and, as applicable to the standard, others with expertise in law, statistics, metrology, quality management, or human factors.

3.4) No one who contributed to the original drafting of the standard, and no current SC or IC member, shall be a member of the STRP for that standard.

3.5) The STRP shall include a non-voting liaison chosen by the SC to provide insight and information from the SC about the standard.

### 4. Appointment Process

4.1) The OSAC Program Office (OPO) shall review the OSAC Applicants Database for names of people who indicated an interest in serving on a STRP and shall solicit recommendations from SAC Chairs, NIST scientific staff, and other experts. OPO shall seek a balance of expertise that may include NIST scientific experts, academic scientists or others to provide an external view of the standard.

4.2) OPO shall prepare a list of experts to serve on the STRP.

4.3) The number of STRP members and their areas of expertise will depend on the nature and complexity of the standard. There shall be a minimum of five members appointed to a STRP.

4.4) OPO shall transmit the draft list of members, with a designated chair, to the FSSB and consider any resulting comments or suggestions.

4.4.1) The FSSB may suggest a substitute member or substitute chair for consideration by OPO in making its final determination.

4.4.2) If two-thirds or more of the FSSB members vote against a proposed member or the designated chair of the STRP, OPO shall appoint a substitute.

4.4.3) Once the list is finalized, OPO shall send an invitation to the chair and the

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proposed participants of the STRP. The invitation shall describe the role and responsibilities of STRP members, the expected time commitment, an outline of the STRP process, and guidelines for behavior. Before joining an STRP, members shall agree to adhere to the OSAC Code of Responsibility and disclose any actual or apparent conflict of interest. If any proposed member is unable or unwilling to serve, OPO will appoint a substitute using the process in this Section.

## 5. Role and Responsibilities of Members

STRP members shall:

5.1) Attend scheduled meetings of the STRP.

5.2) Review the draft standard in an objective and impartial manner considering the criteria contained in the *Instructions to STRPs*. Members shall strive to collaboratively write a consensus report on the proposed standard.

5.3) Respect the confidentiality of STRP deliberations and not share preliminary drafts or comments except as described in Section 6.

## 6. Process for Conducting the Review and Producing the Report

6.1) The Chair shall convene an initial meeting to review roles, behavior, process, and timelines.

6.2) The STRP shall meet as needed to discuss findings and identify areas of consensus and areas of disagreement.

6.3) Within 30 days of its appointment, the STRP shall submit a draft report to the SC or IC that explains its initial conclusions and recommendations.

6.4) At its discretion, the STRP may ask the SC or IC for responses to preliminary comments before submitting its draft report.

6.5) The STRP shall review all SC or IC responses to any preliminary comments and to the draft report before completing its final report.

6.6) The final report should contain an executive summary, general comments, and as applicable, detailed comments on specific parts of the standard.

6.7) The final report should be a consensus report (approved by at least two-thirds of the STRP). However, it should acknowledge internal disagreement on any major issues. 6.8) The

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Chair shall submit to OPO the final report and a checklist indicating that all steps and requirements contained in the *Instructions* were followed.

## 7. Terms of Appointment

7.1) The terms of the STRP shall be consistent with the time necessary to complete the review of the standard(s) and compile the final report(s).

7.2) An STRP member may be terminated by the OPO for not attending meetings, not completing assignments, or not adhering to the OSAC Code of Responsibility.

7.3) If an STRP member is unable or unwilling to complete the term of appointment, the OPO will determine whether a replacement is needed. If necessary, OPO will appoint a substitute using the process in Section 4.

## 8. STRP Meetings

### 8.1) Frequency

8.1.1) There shall be a minimum of two meetings of the STRP prior to completing the final report.

8.1.2) Additional meetings may be held to carry out the review or to address other issues.

### 8.2) Venue

8.2.1) Each STRP may meet virtually using teleconference or webconference technology or in-person.

8.2.1.1) OPO approval is required for any in-person meetings.

8.2.1.2) Meetings shall be closed to the public.

### 8.3) Participation

8.3.1) Two-thirds (2/3) of each STRP shall represent a quorum for a meeting. Members shall attend as many meetings as possible.

8.3.1.2) The Chair may reschedule a meeting if there is insufficient attendance at that meeting.

8.3.2) Active debate on standard and stakeholder requirements is encouraged.

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#### 8.4) Manner of Acting

8.4.1) Meetings may be conducted without following formal rules of procedure; however, if a member objects to a procedure or the chair deems it appropriate, the latest edition of *Robert's Rules of Order* shall be followed.

#### 8.5) Agendas

8.5.1) The Chair shall distribute an agenda before the start of each meeting.

#### 8.6) Minutes

8.6.1) The Chair shall designate a member to take the minutes for each meeting.

#### 8.7) Voting

8.7.1) Each Member shall have one (1) vote. Members not present for an in-person or virtual meeting may notify the Chair of their vote in advance of the meeting.

8.7.2) Proxy voting is permitted and contributes to the voting quorum.

8.7.3) A two-thirds (2/3) majority of voting members is required to reach consensus.

8.7.4) Votes may take place during meetings or via an electronic poll. Electronic voting on complex or contentious issues is encouraged.

#### 9. Amendment, Modification or Variation

9.1) These Terms of Reference may be amended, varied, or modified in writing by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the FSSB and upon receipt of written concurrence from the OPO.

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