

Standard Guide for Facial Comparison: Overview and Methodology Guidelines



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a proposed standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROPOSED STANDARD?

This standard provides guidance for manual facial comparison. Manual facial comparison conducted by a human entails identifying similarities and differences between two images or an image and a live subject to determine whether they represent the same person.

General overviews of facial comparison applications, categories, and methods are provided. The use of facial recognition algorithms is not addressed.

This standard also presents a summary of how the ACE-V (analysis, comparison, evaluation, and verification) scientific method may be used by facial comparison practitioners.

WHY IS THIS PROPOSED STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Identity verification using facial comparison is necessary in various sectors.

This standard makes recommendations on the method of facial comparison used for different applications (e.g., subject identify known versus not known, high or low throughput environments) and different available resources (e.g., image-to-image or image-to-person, real time with no documentation versus detailed documentation).

This OSAC Proposed Standard has been sent to ASTM International (ASTM) for further development and publication. Get involved as a member or by providing public comment.

HOW IS THIS PROPOSED STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

This standard is used as a guide for practitioners to facilitate the consistent application of manual facial image comparison methods.

The standard describes the four most common applications for facial comparisons: intelligence gathering for identity management, screening and access control, investigative and operational leads, and forensic to support testimony in court.

The broad categories of facial comparison introduced in the standard include: assessment (least rigorous), review (more rigorous than assessment and may require documentation), or examination (most rigorous with detailed documentation). Detailed descriptions of these categories are beyond the scope of this standard guide.

The standard covers three facial comparison methods currently identified in the facial identification community: morphological analysis – recommended for use in all applications and categories, superimposition – recommended to only be used during morphological analysis, and photo-anthropometry – not to be used for the applications described in this standard.

