

## Scope of Expertise in Forensic Document Examination



### 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 published standard.

### WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

This standard describes the responsibilities of and general qualifications for anyone engaged in forensic document examination.

Forensic document examination involves skills that are learned in a practical way through a structured, documented, and systematic apprenticeship program of workplace-supervised learning to achieve competence.

Forensic document examination typically evaluates the authenticity, genuineness, or source of a document. It does not involve the study of handwriting for personality assessment, creation of a personality profile, or analysis, or judgment of a writer's personality or character.

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

This standard provides guidance to forensic science practitioners involved in document examination, regarding general responsibilities, type of tasks performed, competence, and continuing professional development.

It establishes consistency in the responsibilities and general qualifications of anyone engaged in forensic document examination. Substantial knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) are required to effectively apply the appropriate scientific and technical methodologies, and to properly evaluate the findings in order to provide appropriate results.



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

This standard is to be used by forensic document examiners (FDE) but will also be useful to others (e.g., law enforcement and other government agencies, attorneys, the judiciary, or private companies and individuals) when encountering issues related to forensic document examination.

The key elements of the standard are the responsibilities and general qualifications of an FDE. The standard requires discipline-specific KSAs to conduct examinations and use equipment, tools, and instrumentation in the examination of documents to provide results regarding documents, including:

- source(s) of writing;
- source(s) of machine-produced documents;
- source(s) of typewriting, impressions, and marks;
- associations of materials and devices used to produce documents;
- genuineness and authenticity of documents;
- detection and decipherment of alterations, obliteration, and indentations, and;
- preservation and restoration of legibility to damaged or illegible documents.

The standard supports continuing professional development encompassing competency maintenance, skill enhancement, and other learning activities that will maintain and broaden the relevant KSAs.