



PEER REVIEW SYSTEM

Policy: The Peer Review System is designed to provide members of the Society of Forensic Anthropologists (SOFA) a mechanism for voluntary, independent review of case reports and analytical notes. SOFA assists in facilitating the Peer Review System by publishing an up-to-date roster of reviewers; however, interactions between reviewer and reviewees are not monitored by SOFA. Furthermore, opinions of reviewers do not reflect the opinions of SOFA.

Purpose: To provide guidelines for a voluntary peer review system for the technical and administrative review¹ of case reports and analytical notes.

Scope: This policy applies to all practitioners engaging in the volunteer Peer Review System. This system is not designed to evaluate standard operation procedures or the following of those procedures.

1.0 Reviewers

- 1.1 Reviewers are SOFA members.
- 1.2 Reviewers notify the SOFA Chair regarding willingness to serve as a reviewer and submit contact information and a current *Curriculum Vita* to present to reviewees.
- 1.3 Reviewers renew their status annually with the SOFA Chair.
- 1.4 Reviewers send up-to-date contact information and current *Curriculum Vitae* to the SOFA Secretary at the time of renewal.
- 1.5 A current list of reviewers is posted on the SOFA website.
- 1.6 A reviewer may request to be removed from the list at anytime.

2.0 Responsibilities of the Society of Forensic Anthropologists (SOFA)

- 2.1 SOFA will maintain a current roster of volunteer peer reviewers.
- 2.2 SOFA will publish the roster of volunteer peer reviewers, along with their *Curriculum Vitae* on www.sofainc.org.

¹ A technical review refers to the analytical evaluation of the test(s), interpretation(s) and supporting documentation. An administrative review refers to the evaluation of the grammar and clarity of the report.



- 2.3 SOFA may remove a reviewer from the roster if found to be in violation of the SOFA ethics statement.

3.0 Responsibilities of Reviewees

- 3.1 The Reviewee will select an appropriate Reviewer from the roster on the basis of their qualifications and/or the nature of the examination performed.
- 3.2 The Reviewee will contact a Reviewer from the roster of volunteers via email.
- 3.3 The Reviewee will, at the time of the review request, indicate necessary or acceptable timeframes or time constraints for the review to be completed.
- 3.4 The Reviewee will submit, at a minimum, a complete report and all analytical notes for review. Digital images or other media should be submitted at the discretion of the Reviewee. The material may be sent by mail or email as appropriate.
- 3.5 The Reviewee will be available during the review period for consultation with the Reviewer.
- 3.6 The Reviewee should be amenable to amending or clarifying the report or notes on the basis of suggestions by the Reviewer.
- 3.7 The Reviewee should maintain a copy of the completed Peer Review Form in the case file².
- 3.8 The Reviewee will notify the SOFA board when an agreement with a Reviewer is formalized in order to generate yearly statistics on the Peer Review Program.

4.0 Responsibilities of Peer Reviewers (Reviewers)

- 4.1 Reviewers will ensure that SOFA has their correct email address and current *Curriculum Vitae*.
- 4.2 The Reviewer may accept or refuse a review request. When considering a review request, a Reviewer should consider potential time constraints, conflict of interest, or expertise in the technical analysis to be reviewed.
- 4.3 The Reviewer will perform a technical and administrative review of the case, following the criteria outlined in the Peer Review Form, and document the review on the form³.

² While maintaining a copy is considered a “Best Practice” practitioners should defer to in-house procedures and policies.



- 4.4 In the event that the Reviewer finds any portion of the report or notes unsatisfactory or unclear, the Reviewer will contact the Reviewee for a consultation prior to completing the Peer Review Form. If the Reviewee and the Reviewer reach an agreement, the Reviewee will amend or clarify the report and/or notes prior to the completion of the review. The revised documents will be reviewed in lieu of the original documents.
- 4.5 The Reviewer will return the Peer Review Form to the Reviewee within the timeframe agreed upon during the review request.
- 4.6 As appropriate or required by the Reviewee or their agency, the report and notes will be returned to the Reviewee or destroyed following the completion of the review.
- 4.7 The Reviewer will be available to discuss the review following the return of the completed Peer Review Form.
- 4.8 The Reviewer should retain a copy of the Peer Review Form for their records. The Peer Review Form will be retained in a manner that maintains confidentiality.
- 4.9 A Reviewer may request to be removed from the Peer Review roster at any time by contacting the SOFA Chair.

5.0 Conflict Resolution

- 5.1 In the event that the Reviewer does not find the report or technical notes to be satisfactory (following consultation and amendment), this will be documented on the Peer Review Form and returned to the Reviewee.
- 5.2 The Reviewee may request a second independent review by contacting a Reviewer following the guidelines in 2.0.
- 5.3 The second reviewer will conduct a review following the guidelines in 4.0.
- 5.4 If a conflict occurs that cannot be reconciled between the Reviewer and the Reviewee, all documents will be submitted to the SOFA board for review.

³ A peer review form is provided on the SOFA website and should be used unless the Reviewee submits an “in-house” form.