

Checking Procedures

Bryony Nuttall¹, Katherine Earnshaw¹ and Richard Rhodes¹

¹The Forensic Voice Centre, York, UK

bryony.nuttall@forensicvoicecentre.com

The Forensic Voice Centre is hosting a roundtable discussion between practitioners within the IAFPA community regarding checking and quality assurance procedures. Our aim is to discuss current procedures in the UK and internationally and to provide a platform to develop and share solutions. The session is open to all conference attendees but is tailored to practitioners who are involved in (checking) casework. The session will involve audience participation, as well as a panel discussion between practitioners.

Context

All forensic units performing forensic analysis in the UK must “have a procedure for carrying out appropriate checking and review”, according to the UK Forensic Science Regulator’s Code of Practice, to ensure that appropriate procedures have been followed and to reduce errors in analyses and reports. This view is supported across international standards and organisations. However, no specific guidance currently exists for forensic speech and audio laboratories on what internal procedures should include. Whilst it could be argued that prescriptivism is neither advantageous nor practical, the lack of standardisation risks inconsistency across forensic laboratories. We believe better communication and information-sharing amongst the IAFPA community regarding this issue can alleviate this risk, so we would like to use this opportunity to learn from other practitioners about their quality assurance procedures and discuss our own methods.

Discussion points

In this session we will discuss the following topics:

- Open, blind, and semi-blind checking approaches [i.e., with or without sight of the first analyst's conclusions/findings, or with sight of some]
- Approaches to reviewing analytical findings and conclusions
- Documentation and recording of corrections / comments
- Differences in checking procedures across case types
- Balancing quality assurance, efficiency, and impartiality
- Opportunities for greater consistency across the forensic speech community

We will also welcome questions and discussion points from the audience during this session. If you would like to submit a question or topic in advance, please contact Bryony Nuttall at bryony.nuttall@forensicvoicecentre.com.

References

[UK] Forensic Science Regulator. (2025). Forensic science activities: Statutory Code of Practice (version 2 – May 2025) - [URL: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68401f4be550203c8209cce9/2025_05_20_Code_of_Practice_final.pdf]