

ORANGE COUNTY
SHERIFF-CORONER DEPARTMENT
FORENSIC SCIENCE SERVICES
Dean Gialamas, Director



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DOCUMENT EXAMINATION UNIT

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Document Examination Unit is part of the Criminalistics Bureau of the Forensic Science Services Division of the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department and currently is comprised of a supervisor and one examiner.

The types of examinations conducted include, but are not limited to, the examination of signatures, cursive or hand

printed writings, erasures, alterations, obliterations, and the development of indented impressions. Mechanical impressions produced from typewriters, photocopiers and other computer generated documents are also examined.

DUTIES OF THE EXAMINER

Along with conducting examinations of disputed items to attempt to establish its authorship or its origin, the examiner may provide limited training in the appropriate procedures for obtaining exemplars / standards necessary to complete the examination.

EXEMPLAR/KNOWN'S CATAGORIES

The success of the examiner to positively identify an individual to a specific questioned item is greatly dependent on the nature of the exemplars provided for comparison purposes.

Exemplars, or knowns, are divided into two categories:

1. Undictated or Non-requested.

Any writings that contain any or all of the questioned signature(s) or text.

Examples: DMV records, bank records, personal or household records, cancelled checks, employment or other business related documents.

2. Dictated or requested.

Any writings that the individual is asked to

prepare and specifically duplicates the questioned signature(s) or text.

- a. If handwritten - Obtain cursive or long-hand writings.



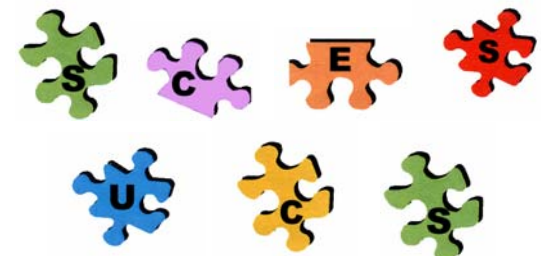
- b. If upper or lowercase hand printing - Obtain like printings
c. If written in pencil - Obtain writings in pencil.



- d. If written in ball-point pen ink - Obtain writings with ball-point pen.
e. If writing is on a check – Obtain writings on sample or blank checks.
f. If writing is on ruled/lined paper – Obtain writings on ruled/lined paper. Likewise, if writing in on un-lined paper, then unlined paper should be used.



- g. Duplicate the wording, the writing instrument and the space on the paper available for writing. Obtain several samples for each questioned item.



Contact the Document Examination Unit or the immediate Supervisor for any special requests or for those cases involving unusual circumstances.



MISSION STATEMENT

It is the Laboratory's mission to serve the criminal justice needs of Orange County by applying sound scientific principles to the collection, evaluation and interpretation of physical evidence.

The services of the DOCUMENT EXAMINATION UNIT are provided at no cost to the law enforcement or other Orange County user agency.

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EXAMINATION REQUESTS

The Request for Evidence Examination form should be completed, stating the areas of the writings that are in question (e.g. signature(s) only, any particular text or notation, indented writing, etc.). If a specific deadline must be met for completion of the examination, indicate the date.

For any other matters that are time sensitive, the examiner should be contacted to ensure the completion of the assignment.

SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE

The Forensic Science Services Evidence Control Unit (ECU) is the repository for all evidence submitted to the Laboratory. Hours of operation are from 0730 to 1600 hours, Monday thru Friday, except holidays. Call (714) 834-6414.

Evidence from the Orange County Sheriff's Department cases is transferred to Forensic Science Services from the Property/Evidence Bureau of the Support Services Division.

For all other agencies, evidence is submitted directly to ECU. To gain access to the receiving area, use the access code or the telephone in the alley on the west side of the Brad Gates Forensic Science Building. Document cases may be submitted for analysis to ECU with a work request form attached without prior approval from the Unit.

DO NOT SHOW OR ALLOW THE SUSPECT TO COPY THE QUESTIONED WRITING – DICTATE THE WORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL.

The individual conducting the exemplar session should mark each exemplar item obtained as a witness to the writing. The item(s) should be marked with the observer's name/initials, date and time. These markings are usually placed on the backside of the item.

Note: Should the item submitted for examination contain mechanical impressions, the machine, if available, should be also submitted. If the machine cannot be submitted, it is recommended that the contributor contact the examiner for assistance in obtaining appropriate standards.

The key word for the contributor to remember when including exemplars for comparison purposes is

COMPARABILITY.

For the examiner to be successful in the identification of an individual to a questioned item, the submissions of "like" or "similar" exemplar items are essential.