

CQR: Examination Records Guidelines

Introduction Each laboratory case record requires a system of note keeping that is appropriate for the circumstances.

4.13.2.2 Observations, data and calculations must be recorded at the time they are made and are identifiable to the specific task.

Laboratory's unique case number **Each page** in the case record must bear the laboratory's unique case number, that is, __ - _____.

4.13.2.1 The spaces (_) represent the two-digit year designation, followed by the six-digit laboratory case number (including zeros as placeholders).

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Examination records requirements

Each page of the *examination records* in the case record must bear the laboratory's unique case number and must be

4.13.2.6

- serially numbered
- initialed or signed
- dated.

4.13.2.2.1

Examination records will include the starting and ending dates of testing.

5.10.2.b

When analytical testing is conducted in locations other than the laboratory (crime scenes for example), the location of the testing must be recorded.

4.13.2.7

When examination records are prepared by an individual other than the analyst who prepares the report or testifies concerning the examination records, the initials of that individual must be on the pages representing his or her work. The reporting analyst must also review and initial these pages.

5.10.3.4

4.13.2.9

The laboratory's unique case number must be recorded on the printout when data from multiple cases is recorded on a single printout.

4.13.2.11

Numbering of pages includes all note pages, pre-printed laboratory worksheets, instrumental spectra and printouts, and plastic protectors for laboratory negatives, prints, and disks.

Entries must be written in ink (or printed if typed on a computer) after the observation or work is performed.

A black ball point or roller-tip pen with a fine tip is recommended.

- Use of colored and graphite pencils should be avoided (see *CQR: Diagrams*).

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**Independent
checks of
critical findings**
4.13.2.12

In cases where critical findings are checked or verified by a second analyst, the second analyst must have expertise gained through training and casework experience in the relevant discipline. A record of this review must be made to indicate that the critical finding was checked and agreed to, by whom, and when the check was performed.

**General
guidelines**
4.13.1.2

Writing should be legible, easily read, and understood without ambiguity.

Notes should be organized and clearly labeled. The use of item number headers or tabbed separator sheets may aid in organizing large case files.

**Making
changes**

To make a change

4.13.2.3

- draw a single line through the incorrect data or observation
- write in the correct information
- initial and date the correction.

4.13.2.3.2

The use of white-out, correction tape, or over-writing and other obliterating marks is not allowed.

Pages must not be removed from the laboratory examination records once the case file has been completed and the pages numbered. If a page is to be disregarded

- draw a single line diagonally across the page
- initial and date the page
- include a brief notation of the reason for striking out the page.

When a change is made to electronically produced examination records during the technical or administrative review process, the original records must be kept in the case record along with the modified version(s) as a record of these changes.

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Summary page The summary page is the first page of the laboratory examination records (see the exceptions below) and contains the following information:

- the page numbers of the examination records
- the initials or signature of the technical reviewer, the page numbers of the examination records reviewed by the technical reviewer, and the date of the technical review
- a list of attachments of administrative records including non-laboratory generated reports, forms, and photographs
- other pertinent case information as deemed necessary by the analyst.

Exceptions:

The following records include space for entering the page numbers of the examination records, initials or signature of the technical reviewer, and other relevant information:

- controlled substances examination notes
- blood alcohol instrumental results
- enzyme immunoassay results.

A summary page is not needed if the case records consists only of administrative records.

Communica- tion logs 4.4.2

Significant communications with attorneys, investigators, pathologists, or other interested parties should be recorded in a communications log. The communication log may be part of the administrative records or as an electronic record in the laboratory case management system.

The communication log should include speaker or caller identification, the date and approximate time, and a brief comment regarding the reason for the communication.

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Two-sided pages

4.13.2.10

Two-sided note keeping is discouraged. In cases where it is necessary, both sides of the page must be marked with the laboratory's unique case number, analyst's initials or signature, and date the work was performed. The page numbers must include the suffix "front" or "back," for example, 21-front and 21-back.

The presence of two-sided pages must be noted on the summary page.

Inserting pages

If pages must be inserted into a set of previously numbered note pages, they may be serially numbered using the number of the previous page, plus a letter suffix, for example, pages 21A, 21B, 21C.

The addition of these pages must be noted on the summary page.

Additions or changes to notes

4.13.2.3.1

All additions and changes made to existing examination records must be initialed and dated by the person making the change.

This requirement applies to all additions and changes, whether made immediately after the completion of the original examination records or at a later date.

Small attachments

Records made on small pieces of paper (for example, "Post-it Notes") must be marked with the laboratory's unique case number and securely taped into the laboratory examination records.

Shorthand notes and abbreviations

4.13.2.13

A system of shorthand or abbreviations may be used to expedite writing repetitive entries of data and observations.

If the abbreviations are not commonly used scientific notations or otherwise obvious from the context, then an analyst's table of abbreviations must be available to the reviewer for purposes of clarity and understanding. These tables are located in the *Definitions and Abbreviations* directory in the relevant technical procedures manual.

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Symbols

The symbols (+) and (-) may be used to designate positive and negative results for commonly used tests when positive and negative results meet either of the following conditions:

4.13.2.13

- universally understood within the applicable forensic discipline or category of testing
 - defined in the applicable procedures manual.
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Rejection of test or observation

When a test or observation is rejected by the analyst, the reason should be recorded.

4.13.2.2

Completion of examination records

Examination records are considered completed prior to any peer, technical, or administrative review and all of the above relevant guidelines must be completed by the individual preparing the record.

4.13.2.3.2

Consultations, corroboration, and assistance from other examiners during evidence examination is encouraged. However, pre-technical or pre-administrative reviews of examination records are not allowed.
