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## QUESTIONED DOCUMENT GUIDELINES

The guidelines below can be used when suspicion is aroused involving disguised/denied handwriting or a questioned document to help the document examiner develop the expert opinion regarding authorship.

The expert opinion is rendered after examining and comparing the questioned document or writing with the provable genuine samples (exemplars<sup>1</sup>).

1. Obtain the originals of each document if possible—otherwise supply best photocopies.
2. Do not fold, staple or punch original documents.
3. Investigate background information concerning the making of the documents, and the chain of custody<sup>2</sup>.
4. Obtain proper proof<sup>3</sup>
5. Find a sufficient amount of exemplars (ideally 10, 25, to 50).
6. Locate exemplars with the same wording configurations.
7. Acquire exemplars prepared/written with the same timeframe as the questioned document.
8. Make three sets of clear photocopies being careful not to delete any of the images from top/bottom/side margins.
9. Give the first photocopy set to the document examiner for use in forming a preliminary opinion.
10. Highlight suspicious features, and write your comments on the second photocopy set.
11. Retain the third photocopy set for future use if needed.
12. Protect the originals in plastic sleeves.
13. Keep the originals in a safe place.
14. Keep track of the originals: where they are stored, who handled them, what was done to them and when. (See #3 above)

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### Definition of Terms

<sup>1</sup> **Exemplars:** (collected and/or requested) Provable genuine samples of handwriting or documents which serve as models for comparison with questioned handwriting or document.

**Collected Exemplar:** Handwriting or a document that existed prior to or not connected with the dispute.

**Requested Exemplar:** Writing which is specifically requested to be written after the dispute has arisen, and then used for the purpose of comparison to the questioned handwriting or document.

<sup>2</sup> **Chain of Custody:** A record of the continuous whereabouts of the evidence, and the name of the person responsible for its care and safekeeping.

<sup>3</sup> **Proper Proof of Genuineness:** Provable as valid and genuine under the law.