
Technical Procedure for Instrument Calibration and Maintenance

1.0 Purpose – To outline the schedules and procedures involved in the maintenance and verification of critical instrument calibration in the Firearms Unit.

2.0 Scope – This procedure applies to all critical instruments used in the Firearms Unit.

3.0 Definitions

- **Balance** – An instrument for measuring weight.
- **Calibration** – The process of determining, checking, or rectifying the graduation of any instrument giving quantitative measurements.
- **Calibration Check** – The process of periodically verifying the calibration status of an instrument by comparison with a reference standard.
- **Caliper** – A device consisting of two legs or jaws, one moveable and one stationary, used to measure diameter, thickness or distance between two surfaces.
- **Chronograph** – An electronic device used to measure and record the velocities of projectiles.
- **Comparison microscope** – Essentially two microscopes connected to an optical bridge which allows the viewer to observe two objects simultaneously with the same degree of magnification.
- **Critical instruments** – Instruments that have a significant effect on the accuracy or validity of the result of a test.
- **Grain** – A unit of weight. 7000 grains equal one pound. The grain unit is commonly used in American and English ammunition practice to measure the weight of components.
- **Performance Check** – The process of routinely assessing the calibration status of a digital instrument.
- **Micrometer** – An instrument used to measure accurately small distances, usually thickness or diameter.

4.0 Equipment, Materials, and Reagents

- Comparison microscopes
- Stereomicroscopes
- Balances
- NRA approved static weights
- Digital Measuring Device (DMD-48)
- Measurement tapes
- Calipers
- Micrometers
- Chronograph
- Sound meter
- Calibrated stage micrometer
- Leica Application Suite (LAS) software
- 10 g reference standard weight
- 1000 g reference standard weight
- Hott-Rods™
- Calibrated ruler (12")
- Calibrated ruler (36")
- DMD-48 calibration rod (24")
- Gage block (0.500")
- Gage block (1.000")

- Forceps
- Cloth glove
- FA#3280 (U.S. Springfield Armory, caliber 22 Long Rifle, bolt action rifle, serial number 666A, Model M2)
- Federal Gold Medal Target, caliber 22 Long Rifle, 40 grain solid lead bullet ammunition

5.0 Procedure

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1** The Section Chemistry Technician shall be responsible for the maintenance of calibration standards and the calibration and calibration checks of critical instrumentation used in the Firearms Unit as defined in this procedure.
- 5.1.2** Each Forensic Scientist shall be responsible for completing performance checks as defined in this procedure.
- 5.1.3** Reference standards shall be stored in the Firearms Unit in a location sufficient to maintain control of the devices and protect them from damage or deleterious effects.
- 5.1.4** Documentation
 - 5.1.4.1** Each room containing critical equipment shall have a sign listing the critical equipment in that room, its most recent calibration date, and the next calibration due date.
 - 5.1.4.2** All calibration and maintenance records shall be maintained electronically.
- 5.1.5** Any instrument that does not zero, is broken, or falls outside of the instrument's tolerance range shall be marked "Out of Service" and shall no longer be used in casework until its performance can once again be verified.
 - 5.1.5.1** Any Forensic Scientist who discovers unacceptable or anomalous behavior of critical instruments shall immediately notify the Section Chemistry Technician and Forensic Scientist Manager.

5.2 Comparison Microscopes

5.2.1 Maintenance

- 5.2.1.1** The Leica Application Suite (LAS) measurement module of newly purchased comparison microscopes shall be calibrated prior to use in casework.
- 5.2.1.2** The LAS measurement module of each comparison microscope shall be calibrated annually.
- 5.2.1.3** On those microscopes where the LAS measurement module is actively being used to make measurements for casework, the LAS measurement module shall be calibration checked monthly using a calibrated stage micrometer.

5.2.1.4 The LAS measurement module of each comparison microscope shall be performance checked each day the module will be used in casework. If a performance check is conducted and the LAS software is subsequently closed, the performance check shall be repeated before the module is used in casework again.

5.2.1.4.1 The performance check shall be conducted using a reference bullet. Reference bullets shall be created by firing caliber 45 Auto, 230 grain, total metal jacketed bullets from the following firearm:

5.2.1.4.1.1 Colt, caliber 45 Auto, semiautomatic pistol, Serial Number FC08540E, Model Mark IV Series 80 Combat Commander, Firearm Reference Collection #FA4327. This firearm shall be maintained in the Raleigh Laboratory Firearm Reference Collection.

5.2.1.4.2 One land impression, chosen by the Unit Technical Leader, shall be marked with an engraved star on each reference bullet. In this manner, the performance checks conducted by the Forensic Scientists will measure the same land impression.

5.2.2 Calibration Procedure

5.2.2.1 The LAS measurement module of each comparison microscope shall be calibrated from either the right or left stage based on the user Forensic Scientist's preference. This shall be the stage from which all future measurements are taken.

5.2.2.2 Place the stage micrometer on the appropriate stage. The use of a blank piece of white paper under the stage micrometer will improve visibility.

5.2.2.3 In the Leica Application Suite (LAS) Software, go to the Scale Bar field and be certain orientation is set to "Horizontal."

5.2.2.4 Go to the Acquire tab > Camera tab > Image Formats and set resolution to highest level (2592 x 1944, Interlaced Large HQ) for both captured format and live format.

5.2.2.5 Place both nosepieces to the 1X objective.

5.2.2.6 Adjust the focus with the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.600 inch and 1.000 inch.

5.2.2.7 Go to the Acquire screen > Camera tab > Calibration Settings field > Type. Select "Calculated."

5.2.2.8 Select "New" and then name as follows: objective and date (e.g. 1X, 12-15-10). After naming the file, choose "OK."

5.2.2.9 A red line will appear on the screen. Adjust the red line to extend 0.400 inch from 0.600 inch to 1.000 inch within the stage micrometer scale. Be certain that the red line starts and ends consistently in relation to the hash mark on the stage

micrometer (e.g., if the red line starts along the right edge of the .6 hash mark, it must end along the right edge of the 1.0 hash mark).

5.2.2.10 Go to the Calibration Settings Tab and type in the value for the actual length of the line shown on the image (0.400) in inches. Choose “Save” in the Calibration Settings area.

5.2.2.11 Repeat the above procedure for each additional objective to be calibrated.

5.2.2.11.1 For the 1X Objective with the 1.5 magnifier, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.700 inch to 0.960 inch and measure 0.260 inch for the calibration.

5.2.2.11.2 For the 2X Objective, change both objectives to 2X, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.800 inch to 1.000 inch and measure 0.200 inch for the calibration.

5.2.2.12 Go to the Acquire screen > Camera tab > Calibration Settings field > Configuration drop down. Select each old calibration in turn and delete.

5.2.3 Calibration Check Procedure

5.2.3.1 The LAS measurement module of each comparison microscope shall be calibration checked using the stage (left or right) used during the calibration procedure.

5.2.3.2 Place the stage micrometer on the appropriate stage. The use of a blank piece of white paper under the stage micrometer will improve visibility.

5.2.3.3 In the LAS Software, click on the Setup Tab to verify the microscope’s serial number.

5.2.3.4 Go to Options > Preferences > Image and ensure the following settings:

5.2.3.4.1 “Always Confirm Image Name” and “Capture to fixed folder location” boxes are checked.

5.2.3.4.2 “In this format” is set to “Tiff.”

5.2.3.5 Go to the Scale Bar field and be certain orientation is set to “Horizontal.”

5.2.3.6 Go to the Acquire tab > Camera tab > Image Formats and set resolution to highest level (2592 x 1944, Interlaced Large HQ) for both captured format and live format.

5.2.3.7 Place both nosepieces to the 1X objective.

5.2.3.8 Adjust the focus with the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.600 inch and 1.000 inch.

5.2.3.9 Acquire the image and save with the following file name format: Cal Check, date, objective, stage, and initials of the person performing the calibration check.

5.2.3.9.1 The images taken immediately following the recalibration of the microscope shall be named "Recal Check."

5.2.3.10 In the "Image Data" area, add the serial number of the microscope in the "Description" field.

5.2.3.11 Go to the Process Screen, > Annotate Tab > Basic Annotation field, click "Show". In the "Line" area, click "Show" and then choose "Distance Line" from the drop down menu. Measure an area of the stage micrometer that equals 0.200 inch and verify that the distance line reads 0.200 inch.

5.2.3.11.1 This measurement can be accomplished with the scale bar.

5.2.3.12 Under the Information Tab, make sure that "Image Name," "Date," "Time," and "Description" are checked.

5.2.3.13 Click "Merge" and "Replace."

5.2.3.14 Repeat the above procedure (beginning with **5.2.3.8**) for each additional objective calibrated.

5.2.3.14.1 For the 1X Objective with the 1.5 magnifier, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.800 inch to 1.000 inch and measure 0.195 inch for the calibration check.

5.2.3.14.2 For the 2X Objective, change both objectives to 2X, place the stage micrometer centered on the area between and including 0.800 inch to 1.000 inch and measure 0.185 inch for the calibration.

5.2.4 Performance Check Procedure

5.2.4.1 Place the reference bullet on the stage used during the calibration procedure.

5.2.4.2 Using the LAS measurement module, measure the width of the designated land impression.

5.2.4.3 The tolerance for this width shall be +/- 0.005 inch. If the measured width falls within this tolerance range, the successful performance check shall be recorded in Forensic Advantage (FA).

5.2.4.4 In the event that a performance check fails, a calibration check shall be performed before the LAS measurement module may be used in casework.

5.2.5 In the event that a calibration check fails, a calibration shall be performed before the microscope may be used in casework. If this calibration is unsuccessful, the microscope shall be removed from casework as outlined in 5.1.3 above.

5.3 Stereomicroscopes

5.3.1 Maintenance

- 5.3.1.1** Each stereomicroscope shall be serviced and cleaned annually by an outside vendor.
- 5.3.1.2** Stereomicroscopes do not require calibration, calibration checks, or performance checks.

5.4 Balances

5.4.1 Maintenance

- 5.4.1.1** Each balance shall be serviced, cleaned, and certified annually by an outside vendor.
- 5.4.1.2** Each balance shall be calibration checked monthly.
- 5.4.1.3** Each balance shall be performance checked each day the balance will be used in casework. If a performance check is conducted and the balance is subsequently powered off, the performance check shall be repeated before the balance is used in casework again.
 - 5.4.1.3.1** The performance check shall be conducted using a reference bullet. Reference bullets shall be unfired caliber 45 Auto, 230 grain, total metal jacketed bullets.

5.4.2 Calibration Check Procedure

5.4.2.1 Small Capacity Balances

- 5.4.2.1.1** Be certain the balance is level.
- 5.4.2.1.2** Turn on the balance and zero or tare the balance.
- 5.4.2.1.3** Be certain the balance is reading in grains.
- 5.4.2.1.4** Using forceps, place the 10 g (154.32 gr.) reference standard weight on the balance. Do not touch the standard weight with bare hands.
- 5.4.2.1.5** Record the resulting weight. The tolerance for each balance shall be +/- 0.05 grain.

5.4.2.2 Large Capacity Balance

- 5.4.2.2.1** Be certain the balance is level.
- 5.4.2.2.2** Turn on the balance and zero or tare the balance.
- 5.4.2.2.3** Be certain the balance is reading in grams.

5.4.2.2.4 Using a glove, place the 1000 g reference standard weight on the balance. Do not touch the standard weight with bare hands.

5.4.2.2.5 Record the resulting weight. The tolerance for the balance shall be +/- 0.05 gram.

5.4.3 Performance Check Procedure

5.4.3.1 Be certain the balance is level.

5.4.3.2 Turn on the balance and zero or tare the balance.

5.4.3.3 Be certain the balance is reading in grains.

5.4.3.4 Place the reference bullet on the balance.

5.4.3.5 The tolerance for this weight shall be +/- 1 grain. If the measured weight falls within this tolerance range, the successful performance check shall be recorded in Forensic Advantage (FA).

5.4.4 In the event that a performance check fails, a calibration check shall be performed before the balance may be used in casework. If this calibration check should also fail, the balance shall be removed from casework as outlined in 5.1.3 above.

5.5 Trigger Pull Static Weights

5.5.1 Maintenance

5.5.1.1 Each set of static weights shall be calibration checked annually.

5.5.2 Calibration Check Procedure

5.5.2.1 All individual weights shall be weighed on the large capacity balance.

5.5.2.2 Be certain the balance is level. Turn on the balance and zero or tare it.

5.5.2.3 Be certain the balance is reading in pounds.

5.5.2.4 Place the weight carefully on the balance and record the weight in the appropriate logbook. The tolerance for each static weight shall be +/- 0.05 pound.

5.5.2.5 Repeat this process for each of the static weights.

5.6 Digital Measuring Device (DMD-48)

5.6.1 Maintenance

5.6.1.1 The DMD-48 shall be calibration checked quarterly.

- 5.6.1.2 The DMD-48 shall be performance checked using the DMD-48 calibration rod each day it will be used in casework and for each separate case in which the DMD-48 will be used. If a performance check is conducted and the DMD-48 is subsequently powered off, the performance check shall be repeated before the DMD-48 is used in casework again.

5.6.2 Calibration Check Procedure

- 5.6.2.1 Power on the DMD-48.
- 5.6.2.2 Using the attached handle, slide the rear movable plate until it is flush with the front plate.
- 5.6.2.3 Zero the DMD-48 by pressing the “X₀” button.
- 5.6.2.4 Remove the end caps from the 24” calibration rod and place it in the center of the unit, with one end against the front plate.
- 5.6.2.5 Slide the rear movable plate until it contacts the end of the calibration rod.
- 5.6.2.6 Record the length. The tolerance for the DMD-48 shall be +/- 0.03 inch.

5.6.3 Performance Check Procedure

- 5.6.3.1 Power on the DMD-48.
- 5.6.3.2 Using the attached handle, slide the rear movable plate until it is flush with the front plate.
- 5.6.3.3 Zero the DMD-48 by pressing the “X₀” button.
- 5.6.3.4 Remove the end caps from the 24” calibration rod and place it in the center of the unit, with one end against the front plate.
- 5.6.3.5 Slide the rear movable plate until it contacts the end of the calibration rod.
- 5.6.3.6 The tolerance for this length shall be +/- 0.03 inch. If the measured length falls within this tolerance range, the successful performance check shall be recorded in Forensic Advantage (FA).

- 5.6.4 In the event that a performance check fails, a calibration check shall be performed before the DMD-48 may be used in casework. If this calibration check should also fail, the DMD-48 shall be removed from casework as outlined in 5.1.3.

5.7 Measurement Tapes

5.7.1 Maintenance

- 5.7.1.1 Each measurement tape shall be calibration checked annually.

5.7.2 Calibration Check Procedure

- 5.7.2.1** Extend the measurement tape to more than 24 inches.
- 5.7.2.2** Compare each measurement tape directly with the 36 inch calibrated ruler at 6 and 24 inches.
- 5.7.2.3** Record the lengths. The tolerance for each measurement tape shall be +/- 1/16 inch.

5.8 Calipers

5.8.1 Maintenance

- 5.8.1.1** Each caliper shall be calibrated annually by an outside vendor.
- 5.8.1.2** Each caliper shall be calibration checked monthly.

5.8.2 Calibration Check Procedure

- 5.8.2.1** Close the jaws of the caliper and verify that the caliper reads zero.
- 5.8.2.2** Using the gage blocks, open the jaws of the caliper and measure the widths of the 0.500" and 1.000" blocks.
 - 5.8.2.2.1** Use the entire surface of the jaws, being careful to hold the caliper level or the reading may fluctuate.
- 5.8.2.3** Record the lengths. The tolerance for each caliper shall be +/- 0.004 inch.

5.9 Micrometers

5.9.1 Maintenance

- 5.9.1.1** Each micrometer shall be calibrated annually by an outside vendor.
- 5.9.1.2** Each micrometer shall be calibration checked monthly.

5.9.2 Calibration Check Procedure

- 5.9.2.1** Close the jaws of the micrometer and verify that the micrometer reads zero.
- 5.9.2.2** Using the gage blocks, open the jaws of the micrometer and measure the widths of the 0.500" and 1.000" blocks.
 - 5.9.2.2.1** Hold the micrometer level or the reading may fluctuate.
- 5.9.2.3** Record the lengths. The tolerance for each micrometer shall be +/- 0.004 inch.

5.10 Reference Standards

5.10.1 The gage blocks, 10g and 1000g reference weights, the stage micrometer, DMD-48 calibration rod, calibrated rulers, and Hott-Rod™ rods shall be calibrated every five (5) years by an outside vendor.

5.10.1.1 The DMD-48 calibration rod and Hott-Rods shall be calibration checked against the 36" calibrated ruler annually.

5.10.2 The NIST QC cartridge case shall be maintained with the reference standards, but does not require calibration.

5.10.3 The designated land impression of each reference bullet used for performance checking the comparison microscopes shall be measured immediately following the annual recalibration of the comparison microscopes. The width shall be documented and the tolerance shall be +/- .005 inch.

5.10.4 Each reference bullet used for performance checking the balances shall be weighed immediately following the annual certification of the balances. The weight shall be documented and the tolerance shall be +/- 1 grain.

6.0 Limitations – N/A

7.0 Safety – N/A

8.0 References

Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners. *Procedures Manual*. 2001.

9.0 Records

- Forensic Advantage Resource Manager Files
- Equipment service reports
- Equipment / Standard calibration reports

10.0 Attachments – N/A

Revision History		
Effective Date	Version Number	Reason
09/17/2012	1	Original Document
10/17/2012	2	Added a sentence to the end of 5.2.1.5, 5.4.1.3, and 5.6.1.2 to clarify that performance checks shall be conducted after a power shut down; added comma in 5.2.3.7; changed grains to grain in 5.4.2.1.5.
02/15/2013	3	Removed Raleigh from the header; 3.0 – corrected definition of caliper; 4.0 – specified which instruments are located in the Raleigh Laboratory, removed lead caliper and lead micrometer checks, and added gage blocks; 5.1.4.1 – added log sheet; 5.2.1.2.1 – clarified maintenance of calibration records; 5.2.1.5.1.1 – added Raleigh Laboratory; 5.4.1.1.1 – clarified maintenance of calibration records; 5.4.2.2 – added language in parentheses; 5.5.1.1 – added Raleigh Laboratory; added 5.8.1.1.1; 5.8.2.2 – replaced caliper reference standard with gage blocks; added 5.9.1.1.1; 5.9.2.2 – replaced micrometer reference standard with gage blocks; 5.10 – added language in parentheses; 5.11 – added language in parentheses; 5.12.1.1 – replaced caliper and micrometer reference standards with gage blocks
05/10/2013	4	5.6.2.6 and 5.6.3.6 – changed tolerance from 0.01 to 0.03 inch
11/15/2013	5	Added issuing authority to header
09/05/2014	6	Header and various subsections – corrected to reflect organizational change
12/11/2015	7	4.0 – removed located in Raleigh Lab 5.2.1.4 – added on those actively being used to make measurements 5.10 & 5.11 – removed located in Raleigh Lab 5.10.2.1 – 5.10.2.9 – transferred from firearms procedure 5.11.2.1 – 5.11.2.9 – transferred from firearms procedure
09/22/2017	8	Updated header information. Throughout – substituted NIST-traceable with calibrated; replaced Unit EM with Chemistry Technician; removed who is to perform calibrations/checks; removed “recorded in logbook” requirements (all now electronic). 5.1.1 – replaced equipment monitor with chemistry technician. 5.1.4.1 – removed logbook requirement and substituted with sign. 5.1.4.2 – replaced logbook requirement with electronic storage. 5.2.1.1, 5.2.1.3 – added “in casework” Old 5.2.1.2, 5.2.1.2.1 – removed Added old 5.2.1.4.1 into new 5.2.1.3 5.2.1.4.2 – replaced EM with technical leader Old 5.2.3.7, 5.2.3.8 – removed

		Old 5.2.5 is now 5.2.4.4 Removed old 5.2.6 and subsections. New 5.2.5 Removed old 5.4.1.1.1 5.4.4 – updated referenced number Added old 5.6.1.2.1 into 5.6.1.2 5.6.4 – updated referenced number Old 5.8.1.1.1, 5.9.1.1.1, 5.10 (and all subsections), 5.11 (and all subsections) – removed New 5.10.1.1 9.0 – removed logbooks, added FA resource manager, service reports, and calibration reports
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