

Guideline Forensic Report

Version 1.0

For you as an expert

The contributions of experts play a role in many criminal cases. Expert advice is usually sought because of a need for knowledge not sufficiently possessed by the court, the Public Prosecution Service and/or the defence. In this context, you have been asked to write a report for the court of law, based on your specific knowledge, experience, research findings and/or results.

This document may help you prepare a report that is in accordance with the statutory requirements and the expectations of the commissioning party. You are free to choose your preferred reporting method. Alternatively, there may be a reporting guideline used in your field of expertise that you prefer to use. In both cases, you are personally responsible for the content and comprehensiveness of the report.

General points of attention with regard to reports

You must present your results in an accurate, clear, unambiguous and objective manner. You must state whether your research or report has been subject to feedback or review. If so, you must also state whether the review was conducted by a fellow expert and/or whether the feedback was given by an Ad Hoc Feedback Giver.¹ In addition, you must state explicitly whether your research relied on the contribution of third parties. As an expert, you must be independent regarding the investigative question and the parties involved.

Furthermore, the following must be included on every page of the report:

- a report number unique to this report.

It is important that only this report has this unique number. It must be distinguishable not only from other items or research reports, but also from earlier versions of the same report (e.g. because additional information has come to light and has been added);

- the report date;
- the page number and the total number of pages (e.g. Page 1 of 10).

Cover sheet

In any case, this should include the following:

- the commissioning party and the its contact person and contact details;
- the report request date and the report date;
- the Public Prosecutor's Office number/case number that your report pertains to;
- whether it is a provisional or definitive report;
- if the report is an addition or amendment to an earlier report, you must note this fact and include the date of the earlier report;
- your name, signature, position and/or area of expertise, and your contact details;

¹ Did you know you can obtain feedback on your report regarding logical consistency, readability and validity? Please see www.nrgd.nl for more information on the availability of Feedback.

- the following disclaimer: 'This report has been drawn up truthfully, complete, to the best of the expert's knowledge and signed. Should you nevertheless have any questions, comments or suggestions, please let me know.'

Chapter division

1. Question

Formulate the question asked by the commissioning party (i.e. the question that you should address based on your research or experience). If possible, include hypotheses prepared in consultation with the commissioning party.

2. Information obtained

Describe the information provided to you by the commissioning party for the purpose of your investigation, which other information you used in your investigation and how this information supports the investigation.

Also specify the following, if applicable:

- the information and research material received: this may include items, documents, objects, substances or gathered, derived or sampled material (including their unique identification numbers);
- the condition of the received information and research material, preferably with photographic evidence (e.g. in the case of a non-sealed item);
- the date of receipt of the information and research material;
- the locations you visited for the purpose of the investigation;
- the persons you investigated, interviewed and/or tested.

3. Identified anomalies and remedial action

Describe any anomalies in the presented research material, stating the action(s) taken to remedy those anomalies. Example: you received a heroin sample as research material for an investigation into the molecular make-up of a cocaine sample.

4. Research methods

Describe your research approach and the method(s) used. In the case of subjective interpretations, you must indicate what your subjective interpretation was based on (e.g. years of professional experience, as demonstrated by examples).

You must describe any deviations from the standard methods used in an appendix to the report. If any interim or final results were contributed by third parties (such as other experts and/or suppliers), you must indicate this here. Also, state the names of the third parties and the date on which you obtained the interim or final results.

5. Results

Describe your observations and research results separately from their interpretation in the context of the case.

In any case, you must specify the following:

- the date on which you conducted the research;
- a disclaimer that the results only pertain to the investigated information;
- the unique identification number of the investigated information for each of the results;
- optionally, a description and a photograph of the location on the piece of evidence where the sample was taken (if applicable).

6. Interpretation

Describe the probability of your observations/results. Estimate the level of certainty on the basis of which you drew your conclusions, as well as the margin(s) of error relating to the research results.

To what extent is your insight into these results supported by academic literature or other experts? Also, state explicitly whether any assumptions or methods are disputed within your area of expertise.

7. Conclusion

Briefly answer the investigative question and indicate to which extent the findings match the prepared hypotheses, if applicable. Demonstrate based on which information and results you drew your conclusion: what is the source or information on which the conclusion is based?

8. Recommendations

This could be a recommendation to conduct additional research, or data, insights or developments that are relevant to the commissioning party.

9. Reference list

If applicable, list the literature you used and the persons you consulted. If you obtained any information from external sources (such as third parties or literature), include them in the reference list and refer to the source of the information in the text.

10. Curriculum Vitae

If you did not already supply your commissioning party with a copy of your CV, please include one now.

Disclaimer

This Forensic Report Guideline has been drawn up in the context of the Ad Hoc Expertise Project by order of the Minister of Justice and Security, under the supervision of the NRGD and in consultation with the Judiciary, the Public Prosecution Service, the LDM (National Police), the TMFI and academic institutions.