

## **Standard Terminology for Expressing Conclusions of Forensic Document Examiners**

### **Designation E 1658-04**

Since the observations made by the examiner relate to the product of the human behavior there are a large number of variables that could contribute to limiting the examiner's ability to express an opinion confidently. These factors include the amount, degree of variability, complexity and contemporaneity of the questioned and/or specimen writings. To allow for these limitations a scale is used which has four levels on either side of an inconclusive result. These levels are:

- **Identification / Elimination**

May be expressed as 'The writer of the known documents wrote / did not write the questioned writing.' This opinion is used when the examiner denotes no doubt in their opinion; this is the highest degree of confidence expressed by a document examiner.

- **Highly Probable**

May be expressed as 'There is a strong probability the writer of the known documents wrote / did not write the questioned writing.' This opinion is used when the evidence is very persuasive, yet some critical feature or quality is missing; however, the examiner is virtually certain in their opinion.

- **Probable**

May be expressed as 'It is probable the writer of the known documents wrote / did not write the questioned writing.' This opinion is used when the evidence points strongly toward / against the known writer; however, the evidence falls short of the virtually certain degree of confidence.

- **Evidence to Suggest**

May be expressed as 'there is evidence to suggest the writer of the known documents wrote / did not write the questioned writing.' This opinion is used when there is an identifiable limitation on the comparison process. The evidence may have few features which are of significance for handwriting comparisons purposes, but those features are in agreement with another body of writing.

- **Inconclusive**

May be expressed as 'no conclusion could be reached as to whether the writer of the known documents wrote / did not write the questioned writing.' This is the zero point of the confidence scale. It is used when there are significantly limiting factors, such as disguise in the questioned and/or known writing or a lack of comparable writing and the examiner does not have even a leaning one way or another.