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**Information technology — Biometric  
sample quality —**

**Part 4:  
Finger image data**

*Technologies de l'information — Qualité d'échantillon biométrique —  
Partie 4: Données d'image de doigt*

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## Foreword

ISO (the International Organization for Standardization) and IEC (the International Electrotechnical Commission) form the specialized system for worldwide standardization. National bodies that are members of ISO or IEC participate in the development of International Standards through technical committees established by the respective organization to deal with particular fields of technical activity. ISO and IEC technical committees collaborate in fields of mutual interest. Other international organizations, governmental and non-governmental, in liaison with ISO and IEC, also take part in the work. In the field of information technology, ISO and IEC have established a joint technical committee, ISO/IEC JTC 1.

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The main task of the joint technical committee is to prepare International Standards. Draft International Standards adopted by the joint technical committee are circulated to national bodies for voting. Publication as an International Standard requires approval by at least 75 % of the national bodies casting a vote.

In exceptional circumstances, the joint technical committee may propose the publication of a Technical Report of one of the following types:

- type 1, when the required support cannot be obtained for the publication of an International Standard, despite repeated efforts;
- type 2, when the subject is still under technical development or where for any other reason there is the future but not immediate possibility of an agreement on an International Standard;
- type 3, when the joint technical committee has collected data of a different kind from that which is normally published as an International Standard ("state of the art", for example).

Technical Reports of types 1 and 2 are subject to review within three years of publication, to decide whether they can be transformed into International Standards. Technical Reports of type 3 do not necessarily have to be reviewed until the data they provide are considered to be no longer valid or useful.

Attention is drawn to the possibility that some of the elements of this document may be the subject of patent rights. ISO and IEC shall not be held responsible for identifying any or all such patent rights.

ISO/IEC TR 29794-4, which is a Technical Report of type 2, was prepared by Joint Technical Committee ISO/IEC JTC 1, *Information technology*, Subcommittee SC 37, *Biometrics*.

ISO/IEC 29794 consists of the following parts, under the general title *Information technology — Biometric sample quality*:

- *Part 1: Framework*
- *Part 4: Finger image data* [Technical Report]
- *Part 5: Face image data* [Technical Report]

## Introduction

The quality of finger image data is defined to be the predicted behavior of the image in a matching environment. Thus, the quality information is useful in many applications. ISO/IEC 19784-1 and ISO/IEC 19785-1 do allocate a quality field and specify the allowable range for the scores, with the recommendation that the score be divided into four categories with a qualitative interpretation for each category. Image quality fields are also provided in the fingerprint data interchange formats standardized in ISO/IEC 19794-2, ISO/IEC 19794-3, ISO/IEC 19794-4, and ISO/IEC 19794-8. However, there is no standard way to interpret the quality score that facilitates the interpretation and interchange of the finger image quality scores.

The purpose of this part of ISO/IEC 29794 is to provide an informative technical report on methodologies for objective, quantitative quality score expression and interpretation for finger images. It will complement ISO/IEC 29794-1 in developing a reference finger image corpus. Such a reference corpus can be built upon the availability of public finger images, which should then be used for quality score normalization.

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# Information technology — Biometric sample quality —

## Part 4: Finger image data

### 1 Scope

For aspects of quality specific to the finger image modality, this part of ISO/IEC 29794:

- specifies terms and definitions that are useful in the specification, use, and test of finger image quality metrics;
- defines the interpretation of finger image quality scores;
- identifies or defines finger image corpora for the purpose of serving as information for algorithm developers and users;
- develops statistical methodologies specific to finger image corpora for characterizing quality metrics to facilitate interpretation of scores and their relation to matching performance.

Performance assessment of quality algorithms and standardization of quality algorithms are outside the scope of this part of ISO/IEC 29794.

### 2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

ISO/IEC 29794-1, *Information technology — Biometric sample quality — Part 1: Framework*

### 3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this document, the terms and definitions given in ISO/IEC 29794-1 and the following apply.

#### 3.1

##### **foreground region**

region of a finger image that contains valid finger image patterns

NOTE The most evident structural characteristic of a valid finger image is a pattern of interleaved ridges and valleys.

#### 3.2

##### **local region**

block of  $m \times n$  pixels of the foreground of a finger image, where  $m$  and  $n$  are smaller than the width and the height of the finger image

#### 3.3

##### **finger image quality assessment algorithm**

algorithm that reports a quality score for a given finger image sample

**3.4**

**finger image corpus**

collection of finger image samples

**3.5**

**finger image quality category**

common attribute or property of a group of finger images that causes them to perform or behave similarly for a class of fingerprint matchers

**4 Symbols and abbreviated terms**

- FQAA finger image quality assessment algorithm
- DFT discrete Fourier Transform
- QSN quality score normalization
- QAID quality algorithm identification
- ppi pixel per inch, which is analogous to dot per inch (dpi).

**5 Finger Image Quality**

**5.1 Defect factors of finger image**

A finger image obtained from a scanner is not always perfect. It may contain defects caused by the user character (e.g user's skin condition), user behavior (e.g. improper finger placement), imaging (e.g scanner limitation or imperfection), or environment (e.g. impurities on the scanner surface). Some of the defects and their factors can be listed as follows:

1. Defect caused by user character
  - A. Extreme skin conditions such as very wet, very dry, etc.
  - B. Scars
  - C. Wrinkles
  - D. Blisters
  - E. Eczema
  - F. Impurities such as dirt, latent print, etc.
2. Defect caused by imaging
  - A. Sampling error
  - B. Low contrast or signal-to-noise ratio
  - C. Distortion
  - D. Erroneous or streak lines
  - E. Uneven background
  - F. Insufficient dynamic range
  - G. Non-linear or non-uniform grayscale output
  - H. Pixels not available due to hardware failure
  - I. Aliasing problems
3. Defect caused by user behavior
  - A. Elastic deformation
  - B. Improper finger placement such as too low, rotated, etc.
  - C. Insufficient area of finger image
4. Defect caused by environment
  - A. Humidity
  - B. Light
  - C. Impurities on the scanner surface

The performance of an automated fingerprint recognition system will be affected by the amount of defects or the degree of imperfection present in the finger image. Therefore, it is necessary to compute the quality score of the finger image produced. Section 6 suggests several possible approaches to compute the finger image quality. The quality score shall be predictive of the performance of an automatic fingerprint recognition system. Furthermore, the quality score should preferably be scanner-independent and source-independent.

## 5.2 Standardization approaches for exchange of finger image quality

As the finger image quality affects the performance of the fingerprint recognition system, the knowledge of quality can and is currently being used to process finger images differently, by for example, invoking some image enhancement methods prior to feature extraction, invoking different matchers based on quality or simply changing the threshold of the system. In fact, the use of finger image quality to enhance the overall performance of the system is increasingly growing. Therefore, there is a need to standardize the quantitative quality score expression and interpretation so that a common interpretation of the quality scores is achieved. This can be done, as suggested in ISO/IEC 29794-1, by either Quality Algorithm Identification (QAID), or Quality Percentile Rank upon standardization of a Quality Score Normalization (QSN) corpus.

## 6 Finger Image Quality Analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

A complete finger image quality analysis should examine both the local and global structures of the finger image. Fingerprint local structure constitutes the main texture-like pattern of ridges and valleys within a local region while valid global structure puts the ridges and valleys into a smooth flow for the entire fingerprint. The quality of a finger image is determined by both its local and global structures. This section describes the current most significant features and characteristics of finger images at both local and global structures that are related to performance of fingerprint recognition systems. Some of these algorithms are described in 6.2 and 6.3 and can also be found in [5-8,10,11].

The finger image is assumed to have resolution of 500 ppi. For other resolutions, the resolution dependent parameters should be scaled accordingly. Possible initial finger image corpuses are the publicly available Fingerprint Verification Competition (FVC) 2000, 2002, 2004, and 2006 [4] corpuses.

### 6.2 Local Analysis

#### 6.2.1 Constituent of Local Analysis

A finger image is partitioned into blocks such that each block contains sufficient ridge-valley information, preferably having at least 2 clear ridges, while not overly constraining the high curvature ridges. For images with a resolution of 500 ppi, the ridge separation usually varies between 8 to 12 pixels [2]. A ridge separation comprises a ridge and a valley. In order to cover two clear ridges, the block size has to be bigger than 24 pixels. Thus the suggested size for each block is 32 x 32 pixels, which is sufficient to cover 2 clear ridges. Nevertheless, other sizes could also be used. Instead of Cartesian coordinate, curvilinear coordinate along the ridge can also be used. This is followed by a segmentation process where each block is tagged as background or foreground. There are several segmentation approaches, such as using the average magnitude of the gradient in each block etc [2]. Local quality analysis is performed on the foreground blocks with a local quality metric computed for each of them.

#### 6.2.2 Approaches to Local Analysis of Finger Image

This section reviews some of the existing approaches for determining aspects of local quality of the finger image.

6.2.2.1 Orientation Certainty Level

The finger image within a small block (as shown in Figure 1) generally consists of dark ridge lines separated by white valley lines along the same orientation. The consistent ridge orientation and the appropriate ridge and valley structure are distinguishable local characteristics of the fingerprint block.

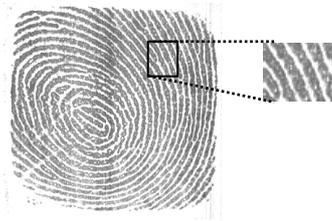


Figure 1 — A typical texture-like ridge block

The grey level gradient ( $dx, dy$ ) at a pixel describes the orientation and its strength at the pixel level. As an example, [7] describes a method of measuring orientation certainty level. By performing Principal Component Analysis on the image gradients in an image block, an orthogonal basis for an image block can be formed by finding its eigenvalues and eigenvectors. Principal Components Analysis is a multivariate procedure which rotates the data such that maximum variability is projected onto orthogonal axes. The resultant first principal component contains the largest variance contributed by the maximum total gradient change in the direction orthogonal to ridge orientation. The direction is given by the first eigenvector and the value of the variance corresponds to the first eigenvalue,  $\lambda_{max}$ . On the other hand, the resultant second principal component has the minimum change of gradient in the direction of ridge flow which corresponds to the second eigenvalue,  $\lambda_{min}$ . The ratio between the two eigenvalues thus gives an indication of how strong the energy is concentrated along the dominant direction with two vectors pointing to the normal and tangential direction of the average ridge flow respectively. The covariance matrix  $C$  of the gradient vector for an  $N$  points image block is given by

$$C = \frac{1}{N} \sum_N \begin{pmatrix} dx \\ dy \end{pmatrix} \begin{bmatrix} dx & dy \end{bmatrix} = \begin{bmatrix} a & c \\ c & b \end{bmatrix}. \tag{1}$$

For the covariance matrix in (1), eigenvalues  $\lambda$  are given by:

$$\lambda_{max} = \frac{(a+b) + \sqrt{(a-b)^2 + 4c^2}}{2} \tag{2}$$

$$\lambda_{min} = \frac{(a+b) - \sqrt{(a-b)^2 + 4c^2}}{2} \tag{3}$$

For a finger image block, orientation certainty level ( $ocl$ ), or the ratio between  $\lambda_{min}$  and  $\lambda_{max}$  is then:

$$ocl = \frac{\lambda_{min}}{\lambda_{max}} = \frac{(a+b) - \sqrt{(a-b)^2 + 4c^2}}{(a+b) + \sqrt{(a-b)^2 + 4c^2}} \tag{4}$$

The range of the  $ocl$  value is between 0 and 1 as  $a, b > 0$ . It gives an indication of how strong the energy is concentrated along the ridge-valley orientation. The lower the value the stronger it is. The value of  $ocl$  can then be used to indicate the quality of the finger image block. The orientation certainty level fails to predict match-ability when there exist some marks or residual in the samples that have strong orientation strength, such as those exhibited by latent prints left by the previous user.

6.2.2.2 Ridge-valley Structure

Good quality fingerprints exhibit clear ridge-valley structure. Thus the measure of the ridge-valley structure clarity is a useful indicator of the quality of a fingerprint.

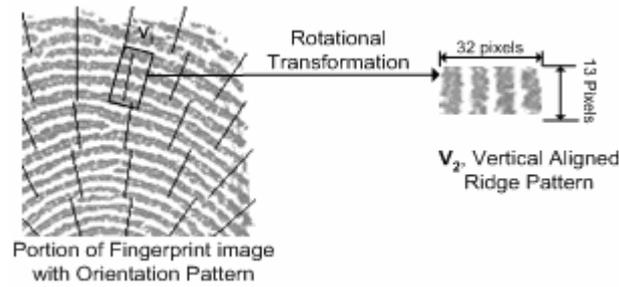


Figure 2 — Extraction of a local region and transformation to vertical aligned ridge pattern

#### 6.2.2.2.1 Ridge-valley Structure Analysis

An example of methods assessing clarity of ridge and valleys is explained in [7]. To perform ridge-valley structure analysis, the finger image is quantized into blocks, preferably of size  $32 \times 32$  pixels. Inside each block, an orientation line, which is perpendicular to the ridge direction, is computed. At the centre of the block along the ridge direction, a 2-D vector  $V_1$  (slanted square in Figure 2) of smaller size than the block size, such as with size  $32 \times 16$  pixels is extracted and transformed to a vertical aligned 2-D Vector  $V_2$ . By using equation (5), a 1-D Vector  $V_3$ , that is the average profile of  $V_2$ , can be calculated.

$$V_3(i) = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^m V_2(i, j)}{m}, \quad i = 1..32 \quad (5)$$

where  $m$  is the block height (16 pixels) and  $i$  is the horizontal index.

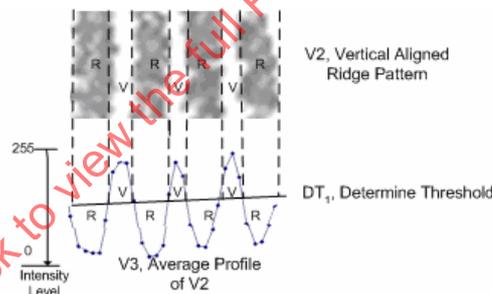


Figure 3 — Region Segmentation of Vector  $V_2$

Once  $V_3$  has been calculated, linear regression (or least square fitting) is then applied to  $V_3$  to find the parameter, called Determine Threshold ( $DT_1$ ).  $DT_1$  is the line positioned at the centre of the Vector  $V_3$ , and is used to segment the image block into the ridge or valley region. Regions with grey level intensity lower than  $DT_1$  are classified as ridges; else they are classified as valleys. The process of segmenting the fingerprint region into ridge and valley using  $DT_1$  is shown in Figure 3. The top portion of Figure 3 shows the ridge pattern. The gray scale distribution of the ridge pattern projected as a one dimensional cumulative intensity profile is shown at the lower portion. The Y-axis is the intensity level, while the x-axis the cross section of the ridge pattern. Each local block will have its own  $DT_1$ .

From the one-dimensional signal in Figure 3, several useful parameters are computed, such as valley thickness and ridge thickness. Since good finger images cannot have ridges that are too close or too far apart, thus the nominal ridge and valley thickness can be used as a measure of the quality of the finger image captured. Similarly, ridges that are unreasonably thick or thin indicate that the finger image may not be captured properly, such as pressing too hard or too soft, or the image is a residual sample. Thus, the finger image quality can be determined by comparing the ridge and valley thickness to each of their nominal range of values. Any value out of the nominal range may imply a bad quality ridge pattern. The ridge and valley thickness values are dependent on the resolution of the fingerprint scanner. To normalize these values, a factor is computed by dividing the scanner resolution with 125 ppi which is the minimum resolution permitted in ISO/IEC 19794-4. To normalize the range of the thickness values, a pre-set maximum thickness is used.

With a scanner resolution of 500 ppi, the maximum ridge or valley thickness ( $W_{max}$ ) for a good finger image is estimated at 20 pixels or 5 pixels for a 125 ppi scanner in the normalized case. The pre-set value of 20 pixel for a 500 ppi scanner resolution is obtained from the median of the typical ridge separation of 8 to 12 pixels [2], and assuming that any ridge separation will not exceed twice of the median value. This will ensure that the pre-set value is indeed the maximum to limit the value of the normalized ridge and valley thickness between 0 and 1. The ridge thickness ( $W_r$ ) and valley thickness ( $W_v$ ) are then normalized as follows:

$$NW_r = \frac{W_r}{((Sc/125) * W_{max})} ; \text{ where } W_{max} = 5 \tag{6}$$

$$NW_v = \frac{W_v}{((Sc/125) * W_{max})} ; \text{ where } W_{max} = 5 \tag{7}$$

where  $NW_r$  and  $NW_v$  are the normalized ridge and valley thickness respectively and  $Sc$  the scanner resolution.

With the ridge and valley separated as above, a clarity test can be performed in each segmented rectangular 2-D region. Figure 4 shows a sample grey level distribution of the segmented ridge and valley. The overlapping area is the region of potential misclassification since in this region, whether a pixel belongs to ridge or valley cannot be accurately determined using  $DT_1$ . Hence, the area of the overlapping region can be an indicator of the clarity of ridge and valley, subject to the ridge and valley thicknesses being within the acceptable range.

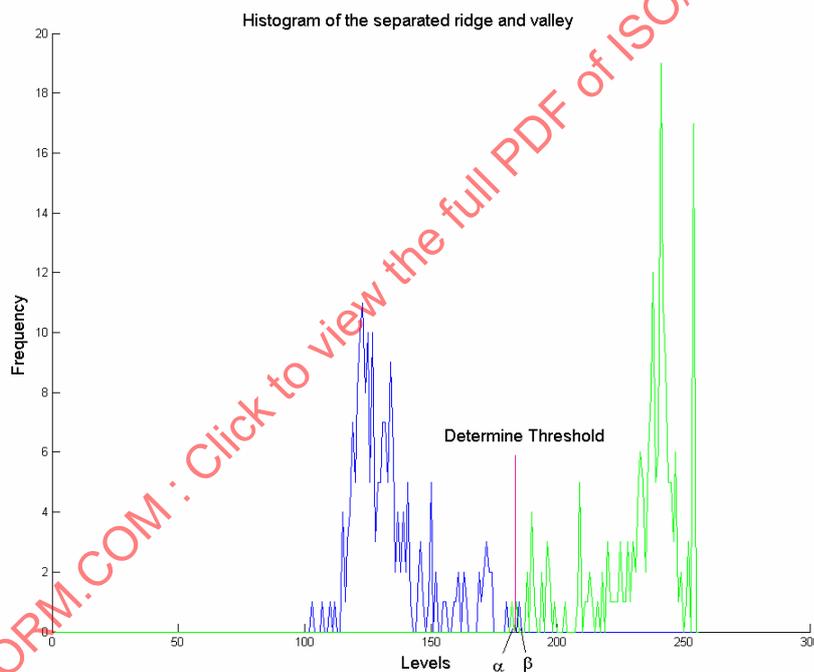


Figure 4 — Distribution of Ridge and Valley

The following equations describe the calculation of the clarity score, where  $v_B$  is the number of pixels in the valley with intensity lower than  $DT_1$  (also known as "bad pixel" for valley),  $v_T$  is the total number of pixels in the valley region,  $\mathfrak{R}_B$  is the number of pixels in the ridge with intensity higher than  $DT_1$  (also known as "bad pixel" for ridge),  $\mathfrak{R}_T$  is the total number of pixels in the ridge region.

$$\alpha = v_B / v_T \tag{8}$$

$$\beta = \mathfrak{R}_B / \mathfrak{R}_T \tag{9}$$

$$LCS = \begin{cases} (\alpha + \beta)/2 & \text{if } ((NW_{vmin} < NW_v < NW_{vmax}) \wedge (NW_{rmin} < NW_r < NW_{rmax})) \\ 1 & \text{otherwise} \end{cases} \quad (10)$$

where  $\wedge$  is the logical AND operator;  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  are the portion of bad pixels while  $(NW_{rmin}, NW_{rmax})$  and  $(NW_{vmin}, NW_{vmax})$  are the minimum and maximum values for the normalized ridge ( $NW_r$ ) and valley ( $NW_v$ ) respectively. Hence, the Local Clarity Score (LCS) is the constrained average value of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  with a range between 0 and 1.

For ridges with good clarity, both distributions should have a very small overlapping area and thus LCS is small. The following factors affect the size of the total overlapping area:

- a. Noise on ridge and valley
- b. Water patches on the image due to wet finger
- c. Incorrect orientation angle due to the effect of directional noise
- d. Scar across the ridge pattern
- e. Highly curved ridges
- f. Ridge endings, bifurcations, delta and core points.
- g. Incipient ridges, sweat pores and dots

Factors (a) to (c) are physical noise found in the image. Factors (d) to (g) are actual physical characteristics of the fingerprint. Therefore, a small window, such as with size  $32 \times 16$ , is chosen to minimize the chance of encountering too many distinct features in the same location.

#### 6.2.2.2.2 Directional Contrast

[8] describes a method for measuring clarity of ridge-valley structure by measuring directional contrast. The value for directional contrast,  $D$ , is obtained by measuring the contrast between the gray values in the ridges and the valleys along the orientation of the ridge flow [8]. The underlying idea is that the region of good quality shows high directional contrast, which means that the ridges and the valleys in a given finger image are well separated with regard to gray values. The overall process to calculate  $D$  is described in reference [8], and the equation is simplified as follows. In Equation (11),  $\Sigma_k(i, j)$  is the sum of the pixels that follow the same orientation,  $\theta$ , and  $(i, j)$  represent the pixel indices in a block of size  $N \times N$  of a finger image.

$$D = |\theta_{\max} - \theta_{\text{ortho}}| \quad (11)$$

where  $\theta_{\max} = \max\{\theta_k = \sum_{i=1}^N \sum_{j=1}^N k(i, j), k = 1, \dots, 8\}$ , and  $\theta_{\text{ortho}} \perp \theta_{\max}$

$k$  = orientation index

#### 6.2.2.3 Frequency Domain Analysis

The signature of a high quality sample is a periodic signal, which can be approximated either by a square wave or a sinusoidal wave. In the frequency domain, an ideal square wave should exhibit a dominant frequency with sideband frequency components (sinc function). A sinusoidal wave consists of one dominant frequency and minimum components at other non-dominant frequencies. Thus, we are able to make use of such information in identifying good or bad quality blocks. The existences of one dominant frequency as well as the frequency of such dominant components are two main elements that are useful in quality determination.

For each block a signature along the ridge-valley ( $x$ ) direction, centered at the centre of each block as shown below can be computed. The signature will pass through the centre of the image block in the direction of  $x$  as shown in Figure 5.

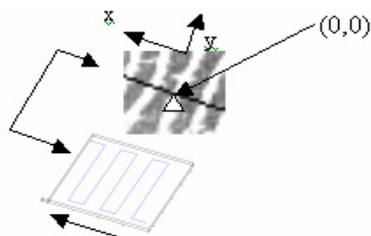


Figure 5 — Signature along x direction

In the coordinate system of  $(x, y)$  as shown above, the signature is computed as :

$$T(x) = \frac{1}{2r+1} \sum_{k=-r}^r I(x, k) \tag{12}$$

where  $I(x, y)$  is the grey level at point  $(x, y)$ ;  $x$  is the index along  $x$  axis and the range  $-25 \leq x \leq 26$  is usually sufficient to cover two ridge separations [2] (Note that the exact value is not critical so long as it can cover at least one periodic cycle completely);  $r$  is the width along the  $y$  axis that the signature is computed from and a typical range used is  $-10 < r < 10$  to obtain sufficient average grey level representation along the  $y$  axis. The exact value is not critical but should not be too high to ensure that the direction of the ridges in the block is consistent or too low which may not provide sufficient robustness against noise.

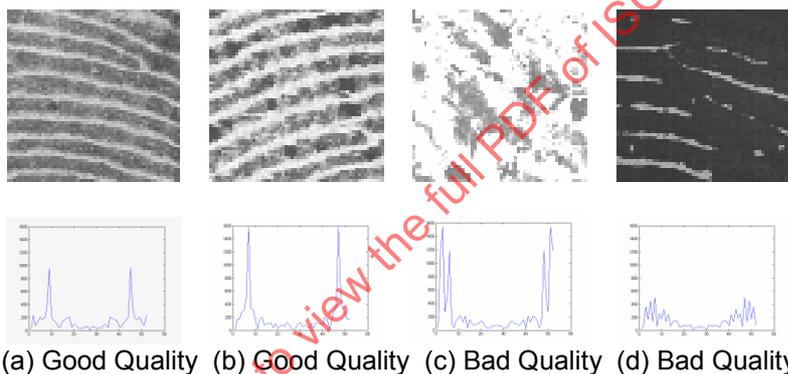


Figure 6 — Image blocks with their respective DFTs of the signatures along the ridge direction.

Figure 6 above shows four finger image blocks with varying quality and their Discrete Fourier Transform (DFT) of the signatures derived. The vertical axis of the plot is the DFT value of  $T(x)$  and the horizontal axis is the index of the  $x$ -axis. Bad quality image (c) can be easily identified by the existence of dominant frequency at very low frequency ( $< 5$ ), which is out of the normal ridge frequency range. On the other hand, figure (d) does not possess obvious dominant frequency, which suggests that the image is highly contaminated.

The final output of this analysis is an image quality measure ( $IQM$ ) computed by:

$$IQM = \frac{A(F_{max}) + 0.3[A(F_{max} - 1) + A(F_{max} + 1)]}{\sum_{F=1}^{NF/2} A(F)} \tag{13}$$

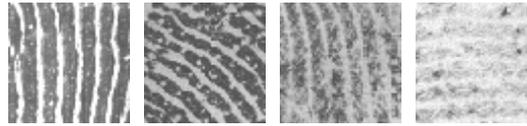
where  $A(x)$  is the amplitude at frequency index  $x$ .  $F$  is the DFT frequency index ranging from 1 to  $NF/2$  with  $NF$  the number of points used in the DFT ( $NF = 52$  is recommended) and  $F_{max}$  is the frequency index when the amplitude is maximum.

The Frequency Domain analysis described in this sub-section computes the one-dimensional signatures by performing averaging along the ridge flow direction. The averaging process filters off noises along the ridges and valleys flow and provides a better modeling of smooth changing signal in a direction perpendicular to

ridge flow. However, the effect of pixel level noise along the ridges and valleys is also neglected due to the averaging process. Random variations in grey levels of the ridges and valleys are another symptom of low quality sample, but these are not considered here as it is measured by the ridge-valley structure analysis and the uniformity measure as explained in Section 6.2.2.2 and Section 6.2.2.4 respectively.

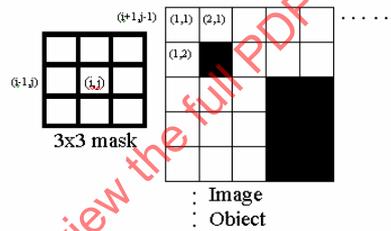
#### 6.2.2.4 Uniformity

Uniformity is the measure of consistency in ridge and valley's grey level. Four samples of fingerprint blocks with good to bad uniformity are shown in Figure 7.



**Figure 7 — Four Fingerprint Blocks. Uniformity ranged from the highest (leftmost) to the lowest (rightmost)**

The first block on the left carries a fairly constant grey level for the ridge-valley regions while the rightmost has no obvious ridge-valley regions that are uniform and easily distinguished. The Clustering Factor is defined as the degree to which similar grey level pixels cluster together in the nearby region. The more the clustering of "black" or "white" pixels, the higher the confidence level of such structure being a useful signal and hence giving higher sample quality. To produce a binary image before the Clustering Factor is computed, the Otsu method [9] is first applied to obtain the optimum threshold values that can be used to binarize the image block.



**Figure 8 — Uniformity computation**

Figure 8 shows the Image Object (32 x 32 finger image block in the example above) as well as a 3 x 3 mask used to compute the Clustering Factor. The mask is centered at  $(i,j)$  and overlaid on the image object. The centre of the mask moves from the top – left corner to the bottom – right corner, computing accumulative results for the clustering factor. For the mask centered at a black pixel, the region covered under the masking area is examined for its pixel value. If more than 4 out of 9 pixels are black pixels, a 1 is returned, else a prorated value,  $(n \times 0.2)$ , is returned, where  $n$  is the number of black pixels including the middle pixel in the 3 x 3 mask. The returned value is accumulated for the whole mask-shifting process with the mask centered at black pixels. A higher Clustering Factor indicates a higher confidence level of the structure and hence higher quality.

### 6.3 Global Analysis

#### 6.3.1 Constituent of Global Analysis

Continuity and ridge-valley uniformity are general characteristics of finger images. Continuity is found along the orientation change while uniformity is observed all over the sample for its ridge and valley structure. Each of these characteristics contributes to a standalone global metric that could be combined with the local analysis metric to obtain the final quality score.

6.3.2 Approaches to Global Analysis of Finger Image

This section reviews some of the existing approaches for determining aspects of global quality of the finger image.

6.3.2.1 Orientation Flow Analysis

Orientation flow is the first indicator to describe the quality of good fingerprint pattern because, in general, the flow of the ridge direction changes gradually, except when a delta or core point is encountered.

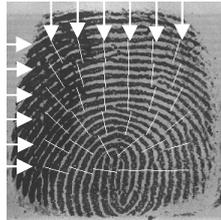


Figure 9 — Ridge-valley direction in smooth trend

Figure 9 illustrates the normal of the orientation flow of a finger image. A 2D array,  $V_4$ , is defined to hold all orientation angles from the fingerprint. To analyze the orientation flow in  $V_4(i, j)$ , the absolute difference of the orientation angle with its surrounding blocks is used. If the 8-neighbouring blocks are considered, this measure, called the Local Orientation Quality ( $LOQ$ ), can be computed using equation (14).

$$LOQ(i, j) = \frac{\sum_{m=-1}^1 \sum_{n=-1}^1 |V_4(i, j) - V_4(i - m, j - n)|}{8} \tag{14}$$

On average, a tolerance to  $8^\circ$  of angular change is expected. The average difference should not be zero because the orientation flow is constantly changing gradually. Therefore, the Local Orientation Quality Metric ( $LOQS$ ) is defined as follows:

$$LOQS(i, j) = \begin{cases} 0, & LOQ(i, j) \leq 8^\circ \\ \frac{LOQ(i, j) - 8^\circ}{90^\circ - 8^\circ}, & LOQ(i, j) > 8^\circ \end{cases} \tag{15}$$

The Global Orientation Quality Metric ( $GOQS$ ) is obtained by averaging all the  $LOQS$  values. Therefore,  $GOQS$  can be computed by the following equation.

$$GOQS = LOQS(i, j) / N \tag{16}$$

where  $N$  is the number of blocks in  $V_4$ . Hence, the  $GOQS$  provides information about the degree of smoothness of the change in orientation angles from block to block.

6.3.2.2 Ridge-valley Uniformity

Referring to finger images in Figure 10(a), (b) and (c), visual inspection concludes that Figure 10(a) has the poorest quality among them, while Figure 10(c) has the best. Such judgment relies on the consistently clear separation between the ridges and the valleys. A method to measure such an observation is to use the ratio of ridge thickness to valley thickness,  $GRU$ . This ratio should be fairly constant throughout the whole image for a good quality finger image. Thus, the standard deviation of such ratio throughout the whole sample gives an indication of the quality of the finger image. Large deviation from the mean ratio value could indicate a bad quality sample as the sample could be more randomly structured.

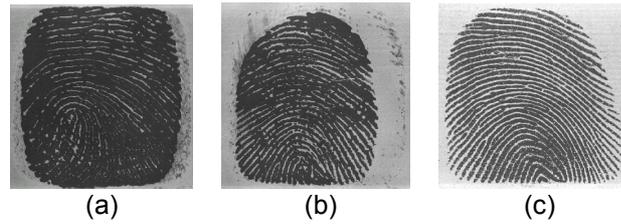


Figure 10 — Three finger images with different ridge-valley uniformity

### 6.3.2.3 Radial Power Spectrum

The maximum value of the Fourier spectrum is defined as stable in that ridge direction. Since the ridges of a finger image can be locally approximated by one sine wave, large value of sine wave energy can represent the strong ridges. The robustness of the ridge structure can be used to measure the finger image quality, and this is shown in Equation 17.  $f(p,q)$  is the results of a 2-dimensional Fourier transform, and  $Re(p,q)$  and  $Im(p,q)$  represent the real part and the imaginary part of  $f(p,q)$  respectively.  $F$  is decided as the maximum Radial Fourier spectrum value within the reasonable Fourier domain. The reasonable Fourier domain refers to the region of neither the highest nor the lowest frequency. Samples of results using this measure as a global measure are shown in Figure 12. The higher the value of  $F$ , the better is the finger image quality.

$$F = \max_{\substack{\text{Reasonable} \\ \text{Fourier domain}}} (|J(r)|) \quad (17)$$

The Radial Fourier spectrum,  $J(r)$ , is determined as:

$$J(r) = \frac{1}{\sum_{\alpha=0}^{\pi} \sum_{r_{\min}}^{r_{\max}} |f(\alpha, r)|} \sum_{\alpha=0}^{\pi} \sum_r^{r+\Delta r} |f(\alpha, r)| \quad (18)$$

where  $f(\alpha, r)$  is the Spectrum  $f(p, q)$  representation in polar coordinate system  $(\alpha, r)$ , see Figure 11;  
 $r_{\min}, r_{\max}$  is the lowest and highest frequency in the reasonable Fourier domain;  
 $\Delta r$  is the sampling step;

$$f(p, q) = \sum_{x=0}^{M-1} \sum_{y=0}^{N-1} e^{-2\pi i \left[ \frac{p \cdot x}{M} + \frac{q \cdot y}{N} \right]} p(x, y) = \text{Re}(p, q) + i \text{Im}(p, q)$$

$$\text{and } |f(p, q)| = \sqrt{\text{Re}(p, q)^2 + \text{Im}(p, q)^2}$$

Samples of Fourier spectrum are shown in Fig. 12 while samples of Radial spectrum are shown in Fig. 13.