

**THIS OPINION HAS NO PRECEDENTIAL VALUE. IT SHOULD NOT BE
CITED OR RELIED ON AS PRECEDENT IN ANY PROCEEDING
EXCEPT AS PROVIDED BY RULE 268(d)(2), SCACR.**

**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals**

The State, Respondent,

v.

Brandan Lamont Richardson, Appellant.

Appellate Case No. 2024-000092

Appeal From Lexington County
Walton J. McLeod, IV, Circuit Court Judge

Unpublished Opinion No. 2026-UP-443
Submitted September 17, 2026 – Filed September 30, 2026

AFFIRMED

Appellate Defender Sarah Elizabeth Shipe, of Columbia,
for Appellant.

Attorney General Alan McCrory Wilson and Assistant
Attorney General Ambree Michele Muller, both of
Columbia; and Solicitor Samuel R. Hubbard, III, of
Lexington, all for Respondent.

PER CURIAM: Brandan Lamont Richardson appeals his convictions for possession with intent to distribute (PWID) cocaine base, PWID fentanyl, and trafficking methamphetamine and concurrent sentences of twenty-five years'

imprisonment. On appeal, Richardson argues the trial court erred in qualifying a witness as an expert in digital forensics and cellphone extractions. We affirm pursuant to Rule 220(b), SCACR.

We hold the trial court did not err in qualifying the witness as an expert witness in digital forensics and cellphone extractions because although she had never been qualified as an expert witness in the past and had only testified in court once, she had the requisite skill, knowledge, experience, training, and education to qualify as an expert witness in the field. *See State v. Baccus*, 367 S.C. 41, 48, 625 S.E.2d 216, 220 (2006) ("In criminal cases, the appellate court sits to review errors of law only."); *State v. Martin*, 391 S.C. 508, 513, 706 S.E.2d 40, 42 (Ct. App. 2011) ("The qualification of a witness as an expert is within the sound discretion of the trial court and will not be reversed absent an abuse of discretion."); *State v. Pagan*, 369 S.C. 201, 208, 631 S.E.2d 262, 265 (2006) ("An abuse of discretion occurs when the conclusions of the trial court either lack evidentiary support or are controlled by an error of law."); Rule 702, SCRE ("If scientific, technical, or other specialized knowledge will assist the trier of fact to understand the evidence or to determine a fact in issue, a witness qualified as an expert by knowledge, skill, experience, training, or education, may testify thereto in the form of an opinion or otherwise."); *State v. Wallace*, 440 S.C. 537, 544, 892 S.E.2d 310, 313 (2023) ("To admit expert testimony under Rule 702, the proponent . . . must demonstrate, and the trial court must find, the existence of three elements: 'the evidence will assist the trier of fact, the expert witness is qualified, and the underlying science is reliable.'" (quoting *State v. Council*, 335 S.C. 1, 20, 515 S.E.2d 508, 518 (1999))); *State v. Henry*, 329 S.C. 266, 273, 495 S.E.2d 463, 466 (Ct. App. 1997) ("There is no abuse of discretion [in qualifying a witness as an expert] as long as the witness has acquired by study or practical experience such knowledge of the subject matter of his testimony as would enable him to give guidance and assistance to the jury in resolving a factual issue which is beyond the scope of the jury's good judgment and common knowledge.").

AFFIRMED.¹

GEATHERS, HEWITT, and VINSON, JJ., concur.

¹ We decide this case without oral argument pursuant to Rule 215, SCACR.