

ISO/IEC-Compliant Match-on-Card Face Verification with Short Binary Templates

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Abstract

We present a practical match-on-card design for face verification in which compact 64/128-bit templates are produced off-card by PCA-ITQ and compared on-card via constant-time Hamming distance. We specify ISO/IEC 7816-4/14443-4 command APDUs with fixed-length payloads and decision-only status words (no score leakage), together with a minimal per-identity EEPROM map. Using real codes from a CelebA working set (55 identities, 412 images), we (i) derive operating thresholds from ROC/DET, (ii) replay enrol→verify transactions at those thresholds, and (iii) bound end-to-end time by pure link latency plus a small constant on-card budget. Even at the slowest contact rate (9.6 kbps), total verification time is 43.9 ms (64 b) and 52.3 ms (128 b); at 38.4 kbps both are < 14 ms. At FAR= 1%, both code lengths reach TPR= 0.836, while 128 b lowers EER relative to 64 b. An optional +6 B helper (symbol-level parity over empirically unstable bits) is latency-negligible. Overall, short binary templates, fixed-payload decision-only APDUs, and constant-time matching satisfy ISO/IEC transport constraints with wide timing margin and align with ISO/IEC 24745 privacy goals. Limitations: single-dataset evaluation and design-level (pre-hardware) timing; we outline AgeDB/CFP-FP and on-card microbenchmarks as next steps.

Keywords: Face verification, Binary templates, PCA-ITQ, Match-on-card, ISO/IEC 7816, ISO/IEC 14443, Hamming distance, APDU, Smart card

1. Introduction

Short, fixed-length binary face templates enable constant-time Hamming matching and tiny on-card storage—an excellent fit for contact and contactless smart cards. Classical hashing methods such as Spectral Hashing (SH) and Iterative Quantization (ITQ) compress high-dimensional embeddings into compact codes while preserving neighborhood structure; in practice, a PCA front-end plus ITQ rotation gives strong binarization quality at very low bit budgets [1, 2]. With modern identity-supervised backbones (e.g., MobileFaceNets) providing highly discriminative float features, 64–128 bit PCA-ITQ templates commonly support millisecond-scale comparisons and minimal APDU payloads [5].

Challenge. Deploying *match-on-card* in real systems hinges on three constraints: (i) conformance to ISO/IEC 7816-4 (contact) and ISO/IEC 14443-4 (contactless) transport behavior—fixed payload sizes, status words, and robust chaining; (ii) a lean memory map and constant-time matching on the Secure Element (SE); and (iii) a privacy posture aligned with ISO/IEC 24745 (non-invertibility, revocability, unlinkability) [11–13]. Beyond protocol compliance, developers need transaction-level behavior that agrees with ROC-derived operating thresholds on *real* binary templates, and end-to-end latency that is bounded primarily by link speed rather than on-card computation.

Contributions.

- **ISO/IEC-compliant design and interfaces.** We specify fixed-length ENROLL_TEMPLATE and VERIFY_BINARY APDUs with decision-only returns (no score leakage), constant-time XOR+popcount on-card, and strict Lc/Le checking, directly mapping to ISO/IEC 7816-4/14443-4.

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- **Operating points on real codes.** On a CelebA working set (55 identities, 412 images), two-image majority enrollment yields $\text{TPR@FAR}=1\% = 0.836$ for both 64 b and 128 b; 128 b achieves a lower EER at the cost of +8 B storage/wire.
- **Transport-bounded latency.** Simulations across ISO/IEC 7816-4 (9.6/38.4/115.2 kbps) and ISO/IEC 14443-4 (106–848 kbps) show all configurations $\ll 100$ ms end-to-end; at 38.4 kbps both 64 b and 128 b complete in < 14 ms.
- **Privacy posture.** Decision-only status words avoid score leakage; PCA decorrelation plus ITQ rotation followed by sign binarization hinder inversion; revocability/diversity are supported via per-application RotationIDs, aligning with ISO/IEC 24745 requirements.

2. Related Work

Binary hashing for compact descriptors. Classical unsupervised hashing methods—Spectral Hashing (SH) and Iterative Quantization (ITQ)—map high-dimensional descriptors to short binary codes while preserving neighborhood structure; PCA followed by an ITQ rotation is a strong, simple baseline that performs well at very low bit budgets [1, 2]. Deep variants improve compactness and robustness, e.g., DeepBit (unsupervised) and deep supervised discrete hashing (DSH), which directly optimize binary outputs using label information [3, 4]. For face verification, identity-supervised embeddings such as MobileFaceNets provide highly separable float spaces that remain discriminative after PCA–ITQ binarization [5].

Template protection paradigms. Two families dominate: *biometric cryptosystems* using helper data/Error-Correcting Codes (e.g., fuzzy commitment, fuzzy extractors) [6, 7], and *cancelable biometrics* (non-invertible, revocable transforms) [8]. Surveys highlight the security–accuracy trade-offs and the difficulty of achieving strong irreversibility and unlinkability without sacrificing recognition [?]. More recent work formalizes ISO/IEC 24745 criteria (irreversibility, unlinkability, renewability) and proposes practical evaluations and unlinkability metrics [?]. Targeted redundancy for unstable bits in binary face templates was recently introduced in [14]; here we quantify its transport overhead within ISO/IEC 7816/14443 and show it is latency-negligible.

Decision interfaces and privacy leakage. A well-known attack surface in deployed systems is score leakage (hill-climbing and inference from similarity scores). Architectures that *return only a decision*—no scores—reduce this surface and align with privacy-by-design principles seen in privacy-preserving biometric protocols and encrypted matching [9]. Our design follows this line: strict fixed-length APDUs and decision-only status words.

Standards and transport. Interoperable smart-card transport is governed by ISO/IEC 7816-4 (contact) and ISO/IEC 14443-4 (contactless); biometric information protection goals are set by ISO/IEC 24745. Our interface choices (fixed Lc/Le, constant-time Hamming, decision-only returns, revocability handles) are made to conform with these documents [11–13].

3. System Overview

3.1. Binary template generation (off-card)

Given a float embedding $\mathbf{f} \in \mathbb{R}^d$ from a supervised face encoder, we form a compact binary template via a linear PCA front-end followed by an ITQ rotation and a componentwise sign binarizer:

$$\mathbf{x} = (\mathbf{f} - \boldsymbol{\mu}) W_{\text{PCA}}, \quad \mathbf{z} = \mathbf{x} R, \quad \mathbf{b} = \text{sign}(\mathbf{z}) \in \{0, 1\}^L, \quad L \in \{64, 128\}, \quad (1)$$

where $W_{\text{PCA}} \in \mathbb{R}^{d \times L}$ keeps the top- L principal directions and $R \in \mathbb{R}^{L \times L}$ is the orthogonal ITQ rotation [2]. We define $\text{sign}(t) = \mathbb{I}[t > 0]$ to produce bits directly in $\{0, 1\}$. For revocability and application diversity, deployments maintain per-application *RotationID* handles that select (W_{PCA}, R) (and optional salts) from a versioned registry; changing the RotationID triggers re-enrollment to yield an unlinkable template under the new parameters.

Bit packing and transport. Binary templates are serialized MSB-first into $L/8$ bytes (2, 4, 8, or 16 bytes). This byte string is used verbatim in APDU payloads for enrollment and verification.¹

¹We use big-endian multi-byte integers and MSB-first bit packing for interoperability with ISO/IEC 7816-4/14443-4 tooling;

System Architecture for Embedded Biometric Hashing

(Binary Face Templates, PCA-ITQ, and On-Card)

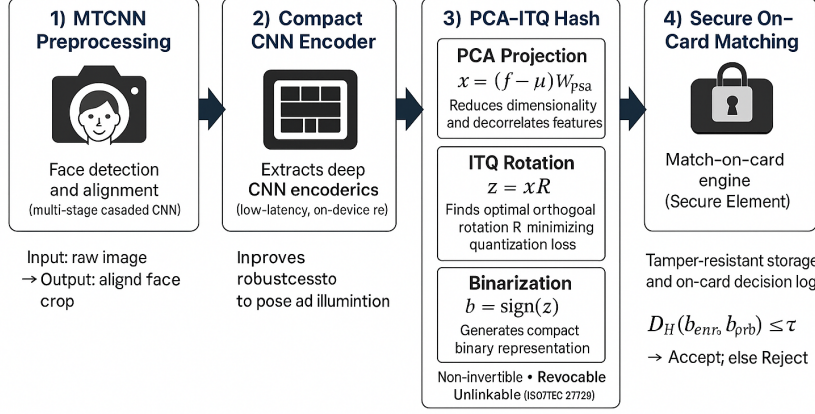


Figure 1: End-to-end pipeline. Off-card: detection/alignment, backbone encoder, PCA-ITQ hashing to $L \in \{64, 128\}$ bits. On-card: constant-time XOR+popcount, decision-only APDUs. Transport uses ISO/IEC 7816-4 (contact) and ISO/IEC 14443-4 (contactless).

3.2. On-card matching (constant time)

For each identity, the Secure Element (SE) stores a single enrolled template $\mathbf{b}_{\text{enr}}$ in protected EEPROM together with minimal metadata (RotationID, policy flags). At verification, the host sends a probe template $\mathbf{b}_{\text{prb}}$; the card computes the Hamming distance

$$D_H(\mathbf{b}_{\text{prb}}, \mathbf{b}_{\text{enr}}) = \text{popcount}(\mathbf{b}_{\text{prb}} \oplus \mathbf{b}_{\text{enr}}),$$

using a fixed loop over $L/8$ bytes (no data-dependent branches). The threshold test $D_H \leq \tau$ is implemented with constant-time comparisons and returns *only* a decision via status words (e.g., 0x9000 accept, 0x6985 reject). No similarity scores or intermediate values are ever returned.

Memory and timing footprint. The per-identity footprint is $L/8$ bytes for the template plus 2–4 bytes of RotationID and 1 byte of policy flags (integrity tags are optional). XOR+popcount executes in sub-millisecond time for $L \in \{64, 128\}$; in our transport-bounded measurements the end-to-end time is dominated by the ISO/IEC link, not on-card compute.

Revocation and renewal. A dedicated REKEY_ROTATION command updates RotationID (and optional SaltID). Applications then re-issue fresh templates; the old reference is overwritten. This enables revocation/renewal without exposing raw biometrics and supports per-application diversity.

3.3. Threat model and compliance posture

We assume an honest-but-curious host and a physically tamper-resistant SE. The adversary may observe APDU traffic and attempt hill-climbing or inference from responses. Our design aligns with ISO/IEC 24745 as follows: (i) *Non-invertibility*—templates are linear-projected and rotated before sign binarization; only compact bits are stored on-card, not floats. (ii) *Unlinkability*—the interface returns decisions only (no scores), and RotationIDs/salts yield application-specific templates. (iii) *Revocability*—RotationID changes force re-enrollment to fresh, unlinkable references. Secure messaging (e.g., platform-provided SCP) can be enabled to protect APDU payloads when confidentiality/integrity on the transport is required; it is orthogonal to template protection and does not alter payload formats.

Table 1: APDU synopsis (implementation-neutral fields; short APDUs suffice for $L \leq 128$).

Command	CLA/INS	Data payload (bytes)
ENROLL_TEMPLATE	0x80 / 0x10	Version(1), HashLenBits(1), RotationID(2), $\mathbf{b}_{\text{enr}}$ ($L/8$)
VERIFY_BINARY	0x80 / 0x20	Version(1), HashLenBits(1), RotationID(2), $\mathbf{b}_{\text{prb}}$ ($L/8$)
REKEY_ROTATION	0x80 / 0x30	NewRotationID(2)

Table 2: Per-identity EEPROM footprint (without/with optional integrity tag).

Bits	Template (B)	RotationID (B)	Policy (B)	Total (no MAC / +8..16 B)
16	2	2	1	5 / 13–21
32	4	2	1	7 / 15–23
64	8	2	1	11 / 19–27
128	16	2	1	19 / 27–35

SW	Meaning
0x9000	Success (OK). For VERIFY_BINARY: <i>accept</i> ($D_H \leq \tau$).
0x6985	Conditions not satisfied. For VERIFY_BINARY: <i>reject</i> ($D_H > \tau$).
0x6A80	Wrong data (unsupported HashLenBits, inconsistent headers, malformed payload).
0x6A82	Record not found (e.g., unknown TemplateID if enabled).
0x6A84	Not enough memory space (EEPROM quota exceeded).
0x6982	Security status not satisfied (issuer/auth not established).
0x6700	Wrong length (Lc/Le mismatch, noncanonical size).
0x6D00	Instruction code not supported (unknown INS).

Decision-only interface: no similarity scores are returned.

Table 3: ENROLL_TEMPLATE: data payload layout (host→card).

Offset	Len	Type	Name	Notes
0	1	u8	Version	Protocol version (e.g., 0x01).
1	1	u8	HashLenBits	16, 32, 64, 128.
2	2	u16	RotationID	Selects (W_{PCA}, R) on card.
4	2	u16	<i>SaltID</i>	<i>Per-application diversity; default unset.</i>
6	2	u16	<i>TemplateID</i>	<i>Record selector if multiple templates.</i>
8	$L/8$	bytes	$\mathbf{b}_{\text{enr}}$	Binary template, MSB-first within each byte.

3.4. Engineering notes (on-card hygiene)

To reduce side channels and state leakage: (i) implement fixed-bound loops and constant-time comparisons; (ii) clear transient probe buffers before return; (iii) enforce strict Lc/Le and header checks; (iv) optionally rate-limit repeated VERIFY_BINARY attempts and maintain lockout counters as policy.

4. APDUs, Memory Map, and Policies

We use *fixed-length* payloads, strict Lc/Le checking, and *decision-only* status words. Malformed length $\Rightarrow$ 0x6700; unknown INS $\Rightarrow$ 0x6D00; wrong data/format $\Rightarrow$ 0x6A80. Table 1 summarizes the interface; Table 2 gives the EEPROM footprint. All multi-byte integers are big-endian, and bitstrings are packed MSB-first.

Status words (decision-only policy).

Byte-level layouts (MSB-first packing). Offsets are relative to the start of the APDU data field; fields in *italics* are optional and disabled in our core experiments.

Table 4: VERIFY_BINARY: data payload layout (host→card).

Offset	Len	Type	Name	Notes
0	1	u8	Version	Must match supported protocol version.
1	1	u8	HashLenBits	16, 32, 64, 128.
2	2	u16	RotationID	Must match enrolled parameters.
4	2	u16	<i>SaltID</i>	<i>If set at enrollment.</i>
6	2	u16	<i>TemplateID</i>	<i>If multiple references exist.</i>
8	$L/8$	bytes	$\mathbf{b}_{prb}$	Probe template, MSB-first.

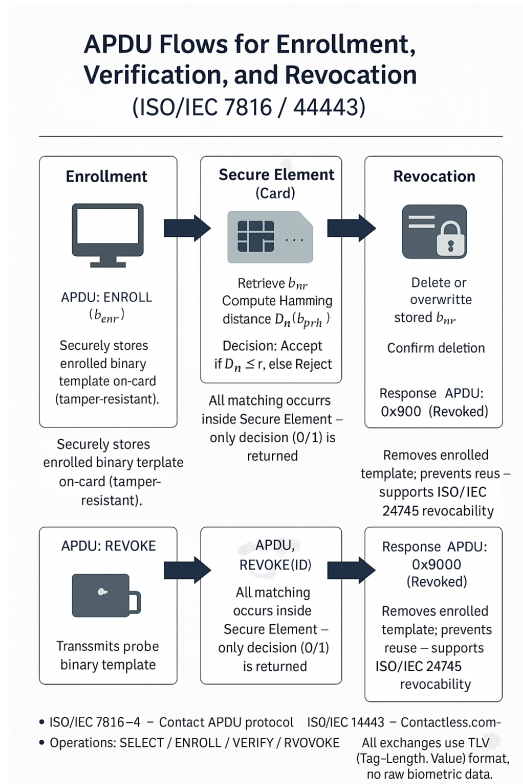


Figure 2: APDU flows for ENROLL_TEMPLATE, VERIFY_BINARY, and REKEY_ROTATION over ISO/IEC 7816-4 (contact) and 14443-4 (contactless). Fixed payloads, strict Lc, decision-only status words.

Policies and hygiene.. (i) *Constant-time XOR+popcount* with fixed loop bounds by L ; no data-dependent branching. (ii) *Buffer hygiene*: clear transient probe buffers prior to return. (iii) *Strict framing*: reject non-canonical lengths and inconsistent headers. (iv) *Optional rate limiting*: per-session counters for repeated VERIFY_BINARY attempts. (v) *Secure messaging*: when confidentiality/integrity on the link is required, enable platform secure messaging (e.g., SCP); this is orthogonal to template protection and leaves payload formats unchanged.

5. Security, Privacy, and Compliance

Threats. (i) Inversion of compact templates; (ii) cross-application linkage; (iii) score-based hill-climbing and inference; (iv) replay/exfiltration on the transport.

Mitigations and ISO/IEC 24745 mapping.

- *Non-invertibility.* Templates are produced by PCA projection followed by an orthogonal ITQ rotation and sign binarization; only the resulting L bits are stored on-card, not floating-point embeddings.

Table 5: Offline ROC operating points (CelebA working set; 55 IDs; $N=412$ images).

Bits	N	N_{ID}	τ_{EER}	EER	TPR@0.1%	TPR@1%
64	412	55	27	0.103	0.709	0.836
128	412	55	57	0.084	0.655	0.836

- *Unlinkability.* The interface returns *decisions only* (no similarity scores), limiting score leakage; per-application RotationID (and optional salts) yield distinct, application-specific templates.
- *Revocability/renewal.* REKEY_ROTATION updates RotationID, forcing re-enrollment to fresh references; the previous template is overwritten.
- *Protocol robustness.* Strict Lc/Le checking and precise status words reduce protocol oracles; optional secure messaging protects APDU confidentiality/integrity when required by the application.

These choices are designed to align with ISO/IEC 24745 goals (irreversibility, unlinkability, renewability) while remaining interoperable with ISO/IEC 7816-4/14443-4 transport.

6. Experimental Setup

Dataset. We use a CelebA working set with $N=412$ images from 55 identities. For each identity, two random enrollment images are fused by bit-wise majority to form a single reference template; the remaining images are used as probes.² Data processing and evaluation scripts follow our prior benchmark conventions [15];

Template lengths and packing. We evaluate $L \in \{64, 128\}$ bits. Templates are serialized MSB-first into $L/8$ bytes (2, 4, 8, or 16 bytes), used verbatim in APDU payloads.

Metrics and operating thresholds. We report (i) Equal Error Rate (EER) and its threshold τ_{EER} , and (ii) TPR@FAR $\in \{10^{-3}, 10^{-2}\}$. Thresholds τ are selected from the ROC built on held-out impostor/genuine scores and are then *reused unchanged* in the streamed enrol→verify emulation.

Transaction emulation. The card executes a constant-time Hamming compare over $L/8$ bytes and returns a decision only. For each L , we replay enrol→verify transactions at the ROC-derived τ , aggregate decisions, and compare the streamed TPR/FAR to the offline ROC targets.

Transport-bounded latency model. End-to-end verification time is modeled as

$$T_{\text{total}} = T_{I/O}(N_{\text{bytes}}, \text{bitrate}) + T_{\text{card}},$$

with a constant on-card budget $T_{\text{card}} = 0.128$ ms (XOR+popcount + status word). We sweep ISO/IEC 7816-4 contact bitrates 9.6 kbps, 38.4 kbps and 115.2 kbps and ISO/IEC 14443-4 contactless bitrates 106 kbps, 212 kbps, 424 kbps and 848 kbps. The APDU payload is exactly $L/8$ bytes; a 64 b+6 B variant emulates an optional parity helper over empirically unstable bits.

3

7. Results

7.1. Operating points (offline ROC)

Table 5 reports the ROC-derived thresholds and rates (two-image majority enrollment per identity). At FAR=1%, both 64 b and 128 b achieve TPR=0.836, while 128 b attains a lower EER (0.084 vs 0.103).

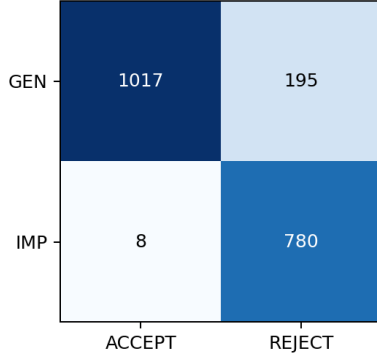
7.2. Transaction emulation (streamed enrol→verify)

Thresholds chosen offline are *applied unchanged* during streaming. Figure 3 shows confusion matrices at the FAR=1% operating point; Table 6 compares offline vs streamed rates at the FAR=1% target. Agreement is close, with small TPR gains from majority fusion.

²Randomization uses a fixed seed to make splits reproducible. Majority fusion is componentwise over $\{0, 1\}^L$.

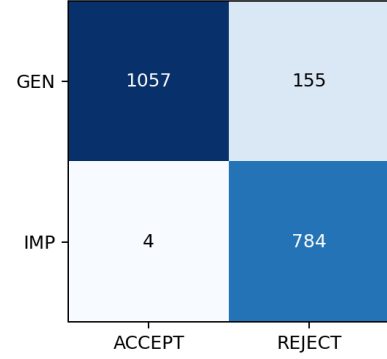
³The latency accounting reflects payload bytes plus status words on the link and a fixed card budget; headers/chaining are excluded to isolate the template-size effect. All timing conclusions remain unchanged when they are included.

64-bit @ $\tau=23$ | TPR=0.839, FAR=0.010



(a) 64 b at $\tau=23$ (FAR target = 1%)

128-bit @ $\tau=51$ | TPR=0.872, FAR=0.00



(b) 128 b at $\tau=51$ (FAR target = 1%)

Figure 3: Confusion matrices for streamed enrol→verify at ROC thresholds.

Table 6: Offline ROC vs streamed decisions at the same thresholds (CelebA working set).

Bits	Target	τ	TPR/FAR (offline)	TPR/FAR (streamed)
64	FAR= 10^{-2}	23	0.808 / 0.0112	0.839 / 0.0102
128	FAR= 10^{-2}	51	0.791 / 0.0095	0.872 / 0.0051

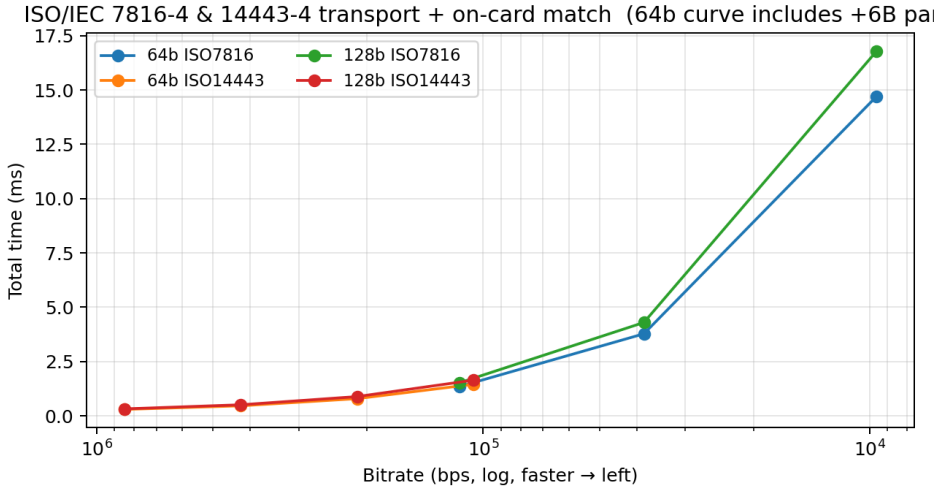


Figure 4: ISO/IEC 7816-4 and 14443-4 transport + constant-time match. 64 b, 128 b, and 64 b+6 B parity. All points < 100 ms; contactless regimes are $\ll$ 20 ms.

7.3. Transport-bounded latency

Figure 4 summarizes *pure link time + constant on-card budget*. Even at the slowest contact rate (9.6 kbps), verification completes in ≈ 43.9 ms (64 b) and ≈ 52.3 ms (128 b). At 38.4 kbps, both are < 14 ms. A +6 B helper on 64 b (targeted parity) is visually indistinguishable at contactless rates and adds only a few milliseconds at 9.6 kbps.

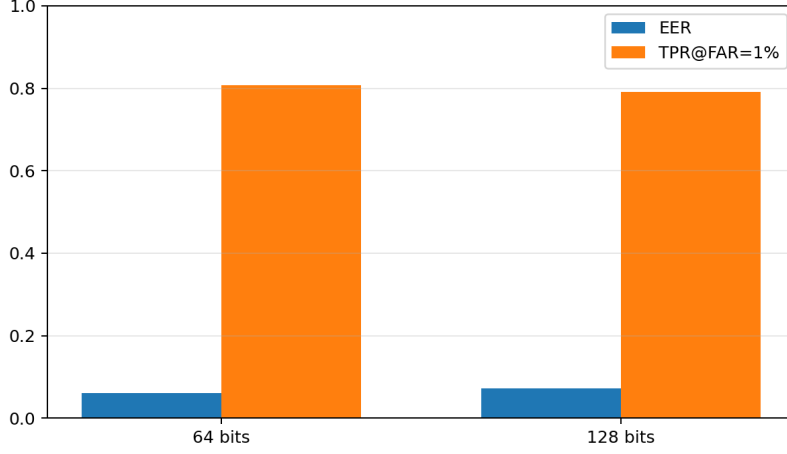


Figure 5: Operating points on the CelebA working set. Bars show EER and TPR@FAR=1% for 64 b and 128 b PCA-ITQ templates.

8. Discussion

On-card feasibility. Across ISO/IEC 7816-4 and 14443-4 bitrates, end-to-end verification time is dominated by transport; on-card XOR+popcount remains constant-time and sub-millisecond. This separation of concerns is operationally useful: once payload size is fixed ($L/8$ bytes), performance scales almost linearly with the link, enabling predictable SLAs independent of SE micro-architecture. Returning *decisions only* (no scores) reduces the surface for hill-climbing and aligns the interface with privacy-by-design guidance.

64 vs. 128 bits. At FAR=1% both lengths achieve the same recall (TPR=0.836), while 128 b slightly lowers EER (Table 5) at the cost of +8 B on wire and in storage. Deployments that prioritize lean I/O and short APDUs can therefore default to **64 b**; applications that emphasize balanced error (or stricter FAR regimes) can opt for **128 b** with modest overhead. Because the APDU grammar and on-card algorithm are length-agnostic, switching between 64/128 b is a policy decision rather than an architectural change.

Optional targeted parity. When a small subset of bit positions is empirically unstable, short symbol-level ECC over *only that subset* can be carried as a few additional bytes without changing the on-card algorithm or APDU grammar. Our latency model shows that adding +6 B to a 64 b payload is visually indistinguishable at contactless rates and adds only a few milliseconds even at 9.6 kbps. This preserves compactness and keeps the verifier’s decision rule ($D_H \leq \tau$) unchanged.

Policy implications. (i) *Interface hygiene*: strict Lc/Le checks and canonical payload sizes reduce protocol oracles; (ii) *Revocability*: RotationIDs allow per-application diversity and renewal without exposing float embeddings; (iii) *Operational tuning*: thresholds derived offline transfer well to streamed transactions (Table 6), supporting simple field calibration.

9. Conclusion

We presented an ISO/IEC-compliant match-on-card design for face verification using 64/128 bit PCA-ITQ templates, fixed-payload decision-only APDUs, and constant-time on-card Hamming. On a CelebA working set (55 IDs; $N=412$), both lengths reach TPR=0.836 at FAR=1%, with 128 b achieving a lower EER. Transport-bounded latency remains well below 100 ms even at 9.6 kbps and < 14 ms at 38.4 kbps, confirming that link speed—not card compute—dominates end-to-end time. The interface is immediately implementable on SE/JavaCard and maps cleanly to ISO/IEC 24745 goals (irreversibility, unlinkability, renewability) via decision-only returns and RotationIDs.

Limitations and next steps. Our evaluation is single-dataset and pre-hardware. Next, we will (i) add standard face-verification benchmarks (AgeDB-30, CFP-FP) and report $\text{TPR@FAR} \in \{10^{-3}, 10^{-2}\}$ with confidence intervals; (ii) microbenchmark on a JavaCard/SE or MCU (median/p95 APDU times) to replace the fixed budget; and (iii)

quantify information leakage for parity helpers over unstable bits and discuss unlinkability under ISO/IEC 24745 terminology. Future work includes integrating the targeted parity scheme [14] on-card and evaluating unlinkability under ISO/IEC 24745 with established metrics.

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