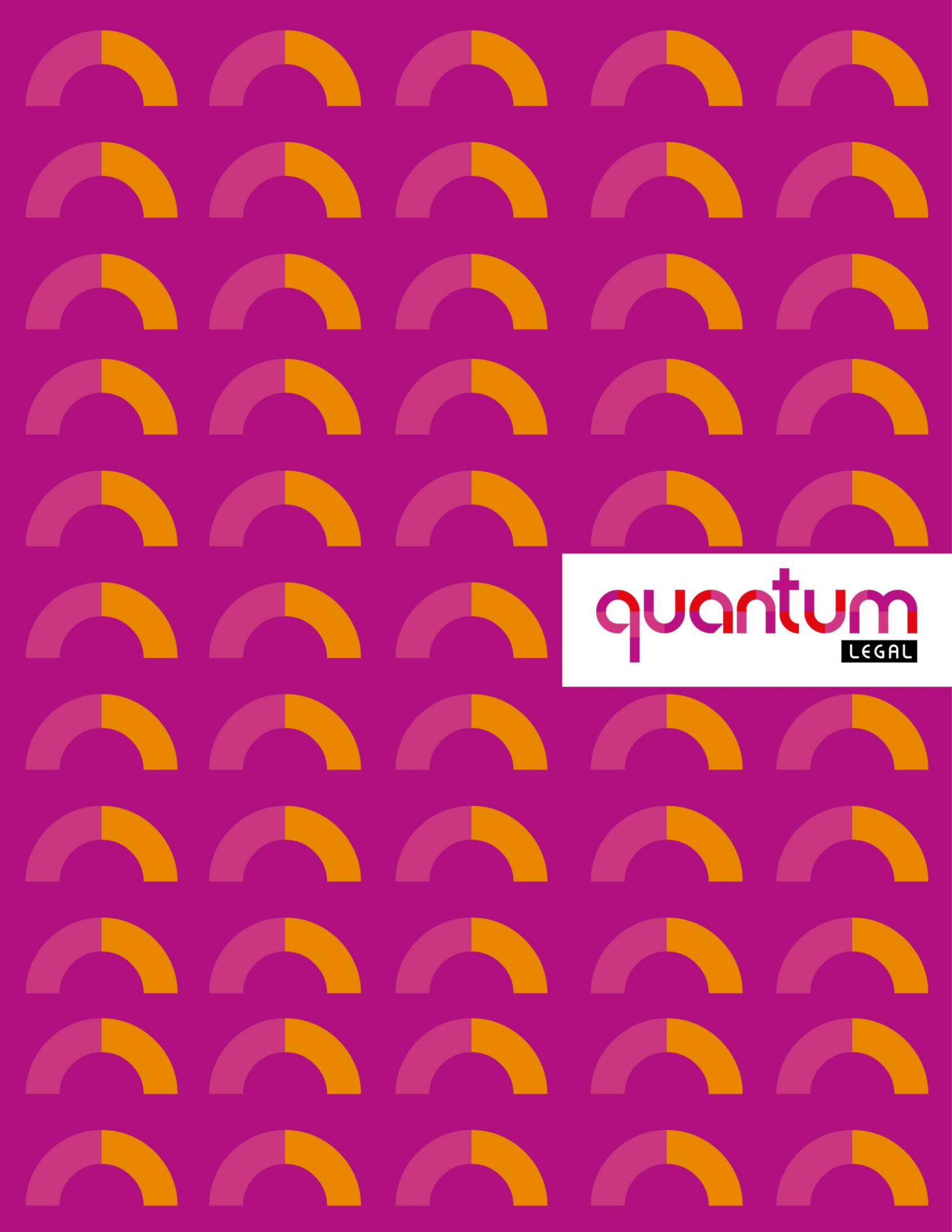




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POL-018: Criminal Matter Handling Policy

Effective Date: 2026.05.01



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Purpose

This policy establishes a structured and time-sensitive framework for the intake, prioritisation, and management of criminal matters. It is intended to safeguard clients' constitutional rights, ensure strict compliance with statutory and court-mandated timelines, and mitigate operational, reputational, and legal risk to the Firm.

Scope

This policy applies to all criminal matters handled by the Firm, including but not limited to summary offences, indictable matters, bail applications, custodial remand matters, urgent warrants, and matters involving vulnerable persons. It applies to all attorneys, clerks, paralegals, and administrative staff involved at any stage of a criminal matter.

Guiding Principles

Criminal matters are inherently time-sensitive and rights-driven. Expedited handling must be proactive, structured, and documented. No criminal matter is to proceed informally or without clear accountability for deadlines, advocacy steps, and client communication.

Matter Classification and Expedited Triggers

A criminal matter shall be designated as "Expedited" where any of the following apply:

1. Client is in custody or subject to restrictive bail conditions
2. Statutory or court-imposed deadlines fall within 14 days
3. Matters involving minors, vulnerable adults, or allegations of violence
4. Active warrants, remand hearings, or urgent prosecutorial actions
5. Express direction from a Court, the Director of Public Prosecutions, or equivalent authority

The expedited designation must be recorded at intake and flagged prominently on the matter file and case management system.

Intake and Initial Assessment

All criminal matters must undergo same-day intake review by an assigned attorney or supervising attorney. The initial assessment must confirm:

1. Client custody or liberty status
2. Applicable statutory timelines
3. Next court date and required filings
4. Immediate advocacy or representation needs

No criminal matter classified as expedited may remain unassigned beyond the close of business on the day of intake.

Assignment and Accountability

Each criminal matter must have:

- A Lead Attorney
- A Secondary Attorney or Clerk as operational backup
- A designated Court Calendar Owner responsible for deadline monitoring

For murder matters the Attorney must have five (5) or more years call. If the Junior Attorney does not have the required years call, the Senior Attorney must be present at all hearings.

Assignment details must be documented on the file and communicated to the team within 24 hours of intake.

Timeline and Court Deadline Control

All court dates, statutory deadlines, filing deadlines, and remand review dates must be logged immediately into the central court calendar and case management system. Redundancy controls must be applied, including secondary diary entries and automated reminders where available. Missed or compromised deadlines in criminal matters are treated as **critical incidents** and **must be escalated immediately**.

Client Communication Requirements

Clients in criminal matters must receive:

1. Confirmation of representation and next steps within 24 hours of engagement
2. Updates after every court appearance, filing, or material development
3. Clear communication on custody status, bail conditions, and rights

All communications must be logged on Clio via the phone logs, email logs and the Client Portal.

File Documentation and Record-Keeping

Criminal matter files must be maintained contemporaneously and in good order. At minimum, the file must reflect:

1. Court documents and filings
2. Attendance notes and outcome summaries
3. Client instructions and advice given
4. Strategic decisions and risk considerations

File notes are not optional and must be entered by the end of the business day of the relevant event.

Escalation and Risk Management

Any risk of delay, non-attendance, incomplete filings, or procedural irregularity must be escalated immediately to the Supervising Attorney or Department Head. Where client liberty or constitutional rights are at risk, escalation must occur the same day.

Breach of Policy

Failure to comply with this policy may result in corrective action in accordance with firm procedures, up to and including disciplinary measures.

Effective Date

This Policy takes effect on the date of formal approval and remains in force until amended or revoked.

Review and Updates

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure it remains aligned with operational needs, regulatory requirements, and best practices in client care.

Employee Acknowledgement and Confirmation

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received, read, and understood the contents of the **Criminal Matter Handling Policy**.

I confirm that:

- I understand my obligations under this Policy and the standards expected of me;
- I agree to comply with the requirements set out herein and any related procedures, guidelines, or standard operating documents;
- I understand that failure to comply with this Policy may result in corrective or disciplinary action in accordance with organisational policies;
- I undertake to seek clarification where any aspect of the Policy is unclear.

I further acknowledge that this signed confirmation forms part of my official HR and compliance record in accordance with organisational requirements.

Employee Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Position: _____