Case Opening & Scope Locking Policy

Department: Case Files & Investigations
Policy ID: CFI-01
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1. Policy Title

Case Opening & Scope Locking Policy

2. Authority & Legal Standing

2.1 **Binding Instrument.**
This Case Opening & Scope Locking Policy (“Policy”) is a binding operational and governance instrument governing the formal transition of eligible material from intake-stage handling into a defined investigative case file.

2.2 **Condition of Investigation.**
No investigation, analysis, research, or case work may commence unless a Case has been formally opened and scope-locked in accordance with this Policy.

2.3 **Legal Reliance.**
This Policy is drafted to be relied upon in judicial, regulatory, arbitral, and oversight contexts as evidence that the Organisation does not conduct informal, speculative, or scope-drifting investigations and that all investigative activity is authorised, bounded, and documented.

2.4 **Non-Implied Authority.**
Authority to investigate arises solely from compliance with this Policy. No authority may be implied from intake handling, data possession, or internal discussion.

3. Purpose

3.1 **Primary Objective.**
The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that investigative activity only occurs where there is a clear procedural mandate, a defined subject matter, and an explicitly bounded scope approved prior to commencement.

3.2 **Integrity Objective.**
This Policy exists to prevent scope creep, fishing expeditions, retrospective justification, or outcome-driven expansion of investigative activity.

3.3 **Non-Determination.**
Opening a Case does not imply suspicion, wrongdoing, liability, or anticipated outcome. It authorises inquiry only within a locked scope.

4. Scope & Applicability

4.1 **Scope.**
This Policy governs the formal opening of investigative Case Files and the locking of investigative scope following successful completion of all intake-stage requirements.

4.2 **Applicability.**
This Policy applies to:

All Submissions that pass intake and are eligible for investigation
All investigative personnel, analysts, contractors, and systems
All commissioned, pro bono, and public-interest investigations
All case files created by the Organisation

4.3 **Scope Limitation Clause.**
This Policy does not govern investigative methods, analytical standards, evidence handling, publication decisions, or enforcement actions. It governs authorisation and scope definition only.

5. Definitions (Local Only)

For the purposes of this Policy only:

5.1 **Case.**
A formally authorised investigative matter opened following intake clearance and governed by a locked scope.

5.2 **Scope.**
The defined subject matter, temporal bounds, entities, data categories, and investigative questions authorised for inquiry.

5.3 **Scope Lock.**
The procedural act of fixing investigative boundaries prior to commencement.

5.4 **Case File.**
The structured repository created to hold investigative materials authorised under a locked scope.

Definitions are local to this Policy and have no binding force outside it.

6. Permitted Activities

Within the strict scope of this Policy, the Organisation may:

6.1 Open a Case where all intake-stage policies have been satisfied and documented.

6.2 Define and lock investigative scope prior to any investigative activity.

6.3 Assign a unique Case Identifier linking the Case to intake audit records.

6.4 Record authorisation, scope parameters, and commencement timestamps.

6.5 Restrict investigative activity strictly to the locked scope.

No other activities are permitted under this Policy.

7. Prohibited Activities

The following are expressly prohibited:

7.1 Commencing investigation prior to formal Case opening.

7.2 Conducting exploratory, speculative, or “preliminary” investigation outside a locked scope.

7.3 Expanding scope without formal scope modification under a separate policy.

7.4 Opening cases based on assumption, intuition, or anticipated outcome.

7.5 Retroactively documenting scope after investigative activity has begun.

7.6 Using intake-stage materials for investigation absent formal Case authorisation.

8. Procedural Requirements

8.1 **Mandatory Case Opening Sequence.**

A Case may be opened only following completion of the following steps:

a) Intake Clearance Confirmation — verification that all intake gates were satisfied
b) Case Opening Request — documented justification for investigative necessity
c) Scope Definition — explicit articulation of authorised inquiry boundaries
d) Scope Lock — formal locking of scope prior to activity
e) Case File Creation — structured repository instantiated
f) Case Opening Record — audit record created

8.2 **No Deviation.**
Deviation from this sequence constitutes a breach.

9. Safeguards & Risk Controls

9.1 **Scope Components.**

Every scope definition must specify:

– Subject entities or classes
– Temporal boundaries
– Data categories permitted
– Investigative questions authorised
– Explicit exclusions

9.2 **Default Narrow Scope Posture.**
Scope must be defined as narrowly as practicable to satisfy the stated investigative purpose.

9.3 **Scope Freeze.**
Once locked, scope may not be altered except under a formal Scope Modification Policy.

9.4 **Non-Inference Safeguard.**
Scope definition does not imply suspicion or expected findings.

10. Enforcement & Compliance Mechanisms

10.1 **Hard Gating.**
Systems must prevent investigative access prior to Case opening and scope lock.

10.2 **Access Control.**
Only authorised personnel assigned to the Case may access the Case File.

10.3 **Audit Logging.**
Case opening and scope lock events must be logged, including:

Case Identifier
Scope summary
Timestamp
Authorising role or system

11. Breach Handling & Remediation

11.1 **Breach Definition.**
A breach includes:

Investigation without Case opening
Scope drift or unauthorised expansion
Retroactive scope documentation

11.2 **Containment.**
Affected activity is suspended pending review.

11.3 **Remediation.**
Remediation may include scope rollback, evidence exclusion, or case suspension.

12. Limitation of Liability

12.1 The Organisation authorises inquiry, not outcomes.

12.2 No liability arises from lawful refusal to open a Case.

12.3 No liability arises from scope limitations applied in good faith.

12.4 Nothing limits liability where prohibited by law.

13. Non-Delegation & Non-Expansion Clause

13.1 This Policy confers no enforcement, adjudicative, or prosecutorial authority.

13.2 This Policy may not be interpreted to expand organisational scope or override other controls.

13.3 Case opening is administrative, not determinative.

14. Jurisdiction & Governing Law

This Policy is governed by the laws of England and Wales.
Jurisdiction lies with the courts of England and Wales, subject to mandatory statutory obligations.

15. Amendments & Version Control

This Policy may be amended only by the Organisation.
Amendments take effect upon publication.
Case Files retain the policy version in force at time of opening.

16. Supremacy Within Scope

Within the domain of case opening and scope locking, this Policy is authoritative.
Outside that domain, it has no force.