

Whistleblowing Policy

Introduction

This document sets out our policy for dealing with whistleblowing and is aimed at recognised Centres, learners and all interested parties who receive a direct or indirect service from One Awards.

One Awards is committed to high standards of openness and accountability and we encourage Centre staff, learners and any other interested party to come to us and voice concerns about any aspect of the development, delivery and award of Access to Higher Education Diplomas, One Awards units, services or training.

What is whistleblowing?

Whistleblowing is a term used when an individual discloses information relating to wrongdoing or malpractice occurring in an organisation. The alleged malpractice may be classified in many ways, for example, a violation of a law, rule, regulation and/or a direct threat to public interest such as fraud, health and safety violations and corruption.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 exists to ensure that any worker, who discloses information, will be legally protected from being disciplined, dismissed or victimised by the employer as a result of their action. Protection under this legislation is a matter between the employer and worker and this policy does not cover that relationship.

Scope

This policy is designed to encourage the whistleblower to feel confident in raising concerns and to provide a mechanism for doing so. Disclosures should be made promptly and:

- in the reasonable belief, of the individual making the disclosure, that it tends to show malpractice or impropriety; and
- to an appropriate person (see section on How to Raise a Concern below).

One Awards will not investigate allegations relating to an employee at a Centre where the concerns relate to their employment. Concerns of this type should be raised with the senior management within that organisation.

Alternatively, if you require independent advice about a whistleblowing issue you can telephone Public Concern at Work on 020 7404 6609 who offer free, confidential advice to people concerned about crime, danger or wrongdoing at work.

Approach

One Awards will investigate allegations including possible:

- Malpractice, in particular in relation to the assessment of learners;
- Maladministration, including failure to adhere to One Awards' published procedures; and
- Centre difficulties which could lead to either of the above and which could be assisted by early intervention and increased support from One Awards.

Copies of the One Awards policy on malpractice and maladministration can be found on the One Awards website - www.oneawards.org.uk

Appeals or complaints regarding assessment decisions or results are covered by the relevant One Awards policies which are also available on the One Awards

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How to raise a concern

You may notify us of a whistleblowing disclosure through our website using the online contact form (available in the Contact Us section of the [website](#)) or by writing to the Head of Quality, One Awards, 23 Manor Way, Belasis Business Park, Billingham, Teesside TS23 4HN.

Disclosures can also be made verbally, to the Head of Quality, on 0191 518 6550. We will ask you to provide us with sufficient information over the phone to enable us to effectively act upon your request. We will acknowledge your disclosure within two working days.

We will ask you to provide as much evidence as possible to support your disclosure including a full description of the incident or concern, dates and times, names of individuals involved and any relevant documentation. Whistleblowers will be expected to outline why they are particularly concerned about the situation and declare any personal interest they may have.

We will consider each disclosure of information sensitively and carefully, and decide upon an appropriate response. We may share information received in the disclosure with third parties where we consider it necessary to do so.

In most cases, we will keep you updated as to what action is being taken in response to your disclosure. We will normally send you an update within 10 working days of receiving your disclosure, but this may take longer if the issue is particularly complex.

Failure to provide reasonable information may mean that we cannot take the case further though the allegation will be recorded.

Investigations

Due to the varied nature of whistleblowing disclosures, timescales for investigations may vary considerably. The 'investigating officer' will ensure that the investigations are undertaken as quickly as possible without affecting the quality and depth of those investigations.

Our initial investigations will be carried out by a consultant or member of our staff trained in investigating such matters and who are independent of the centre and any individuals under investigation. Should the disclosure raise serious concerns of malpractice, a decision will be made on whether or not further investigation is needed.

Investigations will be carried out in line with the procedure set out in our Malpractice and Maladministration Policy and include our own data and documentation as well as evidence provided by relevant parties, for example the Centre, Centre staff, learner or the individual notifying us about the case.

Response

The 'investigating officer' will send a written acknowledgement of the concerns to the whistleblower as soon as practically possible and thereafter report back to them the outcome of the investigation. This will inform them as to whether or not we could prove or disprove their allegation but we will not share the detail of the fact find, investigation or a sanction.

If the investigation is prolonged, the investigating officer will keep the whistleblower informed as to the progress of the investigation and an indication of the timescale for conclusion.



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If you have raised a concern we will, as far as possible, keep you informed of the decisions taken and the outcome of any enquiries and investigations carried out. However, we will not be able to inform you of any matters which would infringe our duty of confidentiality to others.

All responses to the whistleblower will be in writing and sent to their home address, an address nominated by them or by email depending upon their preference. If the whistleblower does not tell us who they are, it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter, to protect their position or to give them feedback. public

Confidentiality

One Awards recognises that the decision to report a concern can be a difficult one to make, not least because of the fear of reprisal from those responsible for the malpractice or wrongdoing.

One Awards will treat all disclosures in a confidential and sensitive manner. The identity of a whistleblower may be kept confidential so long as it does not hinder any investigation. However, the whistleblower may need to provide a further statement to assist in the investigation.

Whistleblowers should be aware that the source of the information may be revealed during the investigation itself and in serious concerns they may be asked to provide a statement or act as a witness.

Anonymous or vexatious allegations

We will ask that, where possible, whistleblowers include their name and contact details with their allegation. Concerns raised anonymously or through a third party may have less validity and it may not be possible to investigate them.

We reserve the right to cease corresponding with a whistleblower where we believe, in our reasonable opinion, the disclosure may be vexatious.

Review arrangements

We will review this Policy annually as part of our self-evaluation arrangements and revise it in line with any feedback from customers, learners, regulatory authorities, external agencies, or changes in our practices.

Contact us

If you have any queries about the contents of this policy, please contact Jennie Lawson, Head of Quality on 0191 518 6550 or email her at jennie.lawson@oneawards.org.uk