Public Interest Disclosure (Whistle Blowing) Policy for Students

1.0 Introduction

This policy on raising concerns in relation to malpractice, respects the current legal requirements in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998. The policy outlines the procedures for reporting any concerns through the appropriate channels.

2.0 Definition

Whistle blowing can be defined as the disclosure of confidential information which relates to malpractice, fraud, or other illegal or unethical conduct connected with the workplace.

The following are examples of malpractice which may be covered under the policy:

- Criminal offences that have been, are being, or likely to be committed, for example: financial irregularity, fraud, bribery or corruption
- Failure to comply with legal or regulatory obligation
- Failure to report a serious incident
- Endangering the Health and Safety of an individual
- Endangering the environment
- Miscarriage of justice
- Attempts to conceal information in relation to any of the above
- Unethical conduct
- Improper or unauthorised use of public funds

3.0 Policy statement

Any student (irrespective of the nature or term of their study) is entitled to raise concerns about perceived irregularities in the governance and running of the College, or the activities of its staff or students, without fear of victimisation or harassment or detrimental effect on his/her academic results. In line with other public bodies the College has a duty to conduct its affairs in a responsible way and as such the College will treat all concerns raised seriously.

This policy outlines a process whereby students can raise genuine and legitimate concerns internally without fear of victimisation or being placed in a moral dilemma with the route of public disclosure as the sole means of action. It provides an opportunity for those concerns to be investigated and for appropriate action to be taken to ensure that the matter is resolved effectively within the College wherever possible. Procedures for students wishing to raise concerns about an external organisation, for example a placement provider is also included within this policy.

This policy is not intended to replace the college complaints policy nor to provide an alternative mechanism for students to raise matters relating to their own learning experiences or that of other students; channels for raising such matters are adequately provided.

This policy should not be used to peruse any private or personal dispute or to question management decisions taken by the College.

4.0 Principles of the Policy

4.1 Any concern raised in accordance with this policy will be treated seriously. The College will investigate, promptly and thoroughly, all concerns raised and will take appropriate action. The student will be kept informed of progress where appropriate and reasonable.

4.2 Any allegations which are found to be malicious, vexatious or frivolous will become subject to the College Disciplinary Procedure. Similarly, any victimisation of a student who raises a concern by a staff member or fellow student will lead to the said person becoming subject to the relevant College Disciplinary Procedure.

4.3 In the first instance, the student should request a meeting to discuss the concern with the Pastoral & Welfare Manager who will ask the student to complete a Raising a Whistleblowing Concern Form.

4.4 The Pastoral & Welfare Manager will discuss the concern with the Principal/Chief Executive and a decision will be made as to whether the matter will be investigated internally, referred to the police or independently investigated. This will be dependent on the nature and severity of the allegations made.

4.5 The Pastoral & Welfare Manager and Principal/Chief Executive will be kept informed of all developments and will ensure, through a review of any investigation, that the procedure and any investigation are fair, thorough and impartial and that the process is fully documented.

4.6 If a student wishes to raise concern about a placement provider, this should normally be raised in the first instance through the placements provider's procedures, which will be outlined in the placement learning agreement or contract and to complete a Raising a Whistleblowing Concern Form. However, if a student does not feel able to raise it directly with their placement supervisor/mentor/practice educator, then the student should contact the Pastoral & Welfare Manager to arrange a meeting to discuss the concern. The Pastoral & Welfare Manager will ask the student to complete a Raising a Whistleblowing Concern Form.

4.7 The Pastoral & Welfare Manager will inform the Director of Apprenticeships and Employment Services that a concern has been raised and agree to provide feedback following investigation.

4.8 The College has a duty of care to ensure that no student who has raised concerns will be victimised and takes such responsibilities seriously. Concerns will be raised with the appropriate senior staff at the placement provider should any evidence of victimisation be brought to the Colleges attention. The College has a Student Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy which will be invoked if appropriate to do so.

5.0 The Responsible Officer

Whilst the Principal/Chief Executive has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this Policy, where an individual member of staff has a concern about the Principal/Chief Executive, they may wish to raise this directly with the Corporation. In that case, they may choose to contact the Clerk of Governance who will make contact with the Chair of the Corporation's Audit Committee. Otherwise, the Principal/Chief Executive will maintain a record of concerns raised and the outcomes (in a form which does not endanger confidentiality) and will report as necessary to the Corporation.

6.0 Confidentiality

All steps will be taken to protect students raising concerns in good faith by maintaining confidentiality as far as is reasonable and consistent with progressing the matter. Students are encouraged to put their names to any disclosures, as concerns expressed anonymously are much less powerful, but they will be considered at the discretion of the College. Students must accept that, in some circumstances, it may be inevitably possible to deduce their identity and as such confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

7.0 Related Documents

Safeguarding Policy (POL-CP-01)
Safeguarding: Concerns and allegations made about staff, including supply teachers, volunteers and contractors including low-level concerns (POL-HR-12)
Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy (POL-SS-01)
Customer Complaints Procedure (BAC-Q-05)
Student Disciplinary Procedure (BAC-SS-01)

For further information contact:
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