

WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY FOR STUDENTS

1. The University policy on raising concerns and the reporting of malpractice respects the current legal requirements in accordance with the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA). Where a student, irrespective of the nature or term of their study (i.e. undergraduate, postgraduate, full-time, part-time or distance learning, including students studying for awards of the University within partner institutions), has serious concerns about perceived irregularities in the governance and the running of the University or the activities of staff or other students within the University, s/he should be able to raise those concerns without fear of victimisation or harassment in general, or of a detrimental effect on her/his academic results in particular. The University will treat all such complaints seriously.

2. In line with other public bodies, the University has a duty to conduct its affairs in a responsible way. It is committed to taking into account both the requirements of the funding bodies and the Second Report of the Committee on Standards in Public Life 1996 (the Nolan Committee). In addition, the University is committed to the principles of academic freedom and the highest possible standards of openness, quality and accountability. In line with these commitments, the University encourages any member of the University community, whether employee or student, who has serious concerns about any aspect of the University's work to come forward and voice those concerns. The proper reporting of concerns will maintain and enhance quality and ensure accountability.

3. 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 University wherever possible. Legitimate concerns should be raised if they are in the interests of the University, staff, students or the public.

4. This policy is not intended to replace the existing Student Complaints or Academic Appeals Procedures nor to provide an alternative mechanism for students to raise matters relating to their own learning experience or that of their colleagues; channels for raising such matters are already adequately provided via student representation at various levels of the University committee structure. It is intended to cover concerns that fall outside the scope of other procedures.

5. Examples of malpractice or serious concerns covered by this policy are:

- an offence or breach of any statutory instrument or legal obligation;
- abrogation of appropriate procedures;
- improper or unauthorised use of public or other funds;
- fraud;
- financial irregularity;
- dishonesty;
- malpractice;
- corruption;
- bribery;
- unethical conduct;
- miscarriage of justice;
- danger to the health or safety of any individual or the environment;
- the deliberate concealing of information about the above.

These examples are not intended to be exhaustive. Generally, concerns are likely to involve something which may be unlawful, or which may be contrary to University policies, or which

falls below established standards or practice, or which amounts to unethical or improper conduct.

6. The University will investigate, promptly and thoroughly, all concerns raised in accordance with this policy, and will take appropriate action. The University Principal has overall responsibility for the maintenance and operation of this policy. Responsibilities and routes for further action will be developed in line with the procedures already in place for whistleblowing by University employees, as specified in the Personnel Handbook.

7. Any concern raised in accordance with this policy will be treated seriously. All steps will be taken to protect students raising concerns in good faith by maintaining confidentiality as far as is consistent with progressing the matter. Students who raise concerns through the agreed procedures will not be subject to disciplinary action providing that they do so lawfully, without malice, in the public interest and in a way which respects confidentiality.

8. Concerns should not be raised in order to pursue any private dispute, i.e. a matter which is not, in any way, connected to the business of the University. Raising a false allegation will not necessarily lead to disciplinary action, if it can be demonstrated that the matter was raised in good faith; however, where there is evidence that an allegation has been made with malicious, vexatious or frivolous intent, the matter will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.

Similarly, any victimisation of a student who raises a concern, or any attempts to deter him/her from raising a legitimate concern about malpractice, will be regarded as a serious disciplinary offence.

9. Where students of the University undertake placements in other organizations, the University has a responsibility to ensure, as part of its approval of the placement, either (a) that the placement organization has appropriate whistleblowing policies in place, or (b) where this is not the case, that the organization has seen and agreed to the principles and procedures outlined in the University's own policy. If necessary, where a student feels unable to raise an issue with a placement supervisor or employer due to fear of victimization or harassment, the matter may be raised through the University's internal procedures, and the University will then raise it with the organization in question on the student's behalf.