



WHISTLEBLOWING POLICY

1. Introduction

Employment Education Training Group (EETG) is committed to honesty, integrity, openness and accountability and we expect our learner, staff and our community as a whole to maintain high standards, in accordance with our policies and procedures.

EETG understands, however, that all organisations face the risk of things going wrong or of unknowingly harbouring illegal or unethical conduct. A culture of openness and accountability is essential to prevent such situations occurring or address them when they do occur.

The Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 gives legal protection to staff (including employment agency workers and those on work experience) against being dismissed or penalised by employers as a result of disclosing information which, in the reasonable belief of that member of staff, is in the public interest to disclose and tends to show one or more specified types of malpractice, wrongdoing or dangers. The disclosure is commonly known as 'whistleblowing'.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all learners, employees, and those who are engaged to work for EETG and includes apprentices, interns, agency workers and those with honorary contracts.

The aims of this Policy are to:

Encourage you, whether student, staff, or anyone contractually connected to EETG, to report your concerns about a suspected wrongdoing as soon as possible, in the knowledge that your concerns will be taken seriously, investigated appropriately, and confidentiality respected.

Provide you with guidance as to how to raise your concerns.

Reassure you that you should be able to raise genuine concerns without fear of reprisals, even if they turn out to be mistaken.

Type of concerns to be reported:

Whistleblowing is the disclosure of information that relates to suspected wrongdoing, malpractice or dangers at work or study. This may include:

- Breaches of legal, professional or statutory regulation e.g., health and safety obligations of EETG
- Breaches of agreed ethical protocols
- Criminal offences
- Environmental harm
- Financial or non-financial maladministration, malpractice, bribery or fraud
- Centre malpractice
- Deliberately concealing information demonstrating that one or more of the above are taking place.

3. Raising a whistleblowing concern:

EETG encourages learners to raise any of the concerns with either their tutor or the Teaching and Learning Manager in the first instance. Staff should contact their Teaching and Learning Manager in the first instance.

Where resolution at this stage is not possible, a disclosure should be made in writing to the Director, who is the designated Whistleblowing Officer. Designated alternatives are as follows:

If a disclosure involves or implicates the Teaching and Learning, the disclosure should be made to the HR Manager as follows: hr@eetgroup.co.uk.

If a disclosure involves or implicates the HR Manager, the disclosure should be made to a Director, if appropriate.

Once the concern has been raised, the Whistleblowing Officer (or designated alternative) will carry out an initial assessment, within ten (10) working days, to determine whether there is prima facie indication of malpractice. This assessment will also decide whether the matter should be considered under a different Policy. The reporting individual will be informed of the outcome of the initial assessment, along with an indication of how it is proposed that the matter be dealt with.

If there is prima facie indication of malpractice, the Whistleblowing Officer (or designated alternative) will pursue the most appropriate form of investigation. This may be undertaken by:

- a. One or more senior members of EETG staff
- b. Internal Audit
- c. External Auditors

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- d. Other individuals suitably trained in investigating practice
- e. Referral directly for external investigation by an appropriate body

The reporting individual may be required to attend additional meetings to provide further information. They may bring a colleague or union representative to any meetings under this Policy. Their companion must respect the confidentiality of the disclosure and any subsequent investigation. Should a concern of this nature be raised through Report and Support, the individual will be supported and directed to this policy.

4. Confidentiality

EETG hopes that everyone will feel able to voice concerns openly under this Policy; however, should anyone wish to raise a concern confidentially, EETG will ensure that it does not reveal a reporting individual’s identity to anyone, other than those involved in investigating the concerns. If it becomes necessary for anyone else to know a reporting individual’s identity in order to adequately investigate the concern, EETG will discuss this with them first.

5. Raising a concern anonymously

Raising a concern anonymously potentially makes it more difficult to investigate it properly, as more information may be required; however, if a reporting individual is concerned about possible reprisals if their identity were to be revealed, they should still report their concern to the Teaching and Learning Manager who will consider whether it can be appropriately considered and investigated anonymously.

6. Unconfirmed allegations

If a reporting individual discloses information that alleges malpractice, which is not then confirmed by subsequent investigation, no detrimental or disciplinary action will be taken against them. Where a reporting individual is found to have made malicious or vexatious allegations, particularly if they persist in doing so, action may be taken in line with EETG staff or student disciplinary procedures.

7. Right of Review

If a reporting individual believes that EETG’s handling of the disclosure was flawed on the ground(s) a-c below, there will be a Right of Review only to the Director.

- a. The procedures have not been followed properly; and/or
- b. There is evidence of prejudice or bias in the handling of the case; and/or
- c. There is further evidence of alleged malpractice that was not available at the time of the original disclosure.

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The request for Review must be made within ten (10) working days of the reporting individual being sent details of the outcome of the investigation, to the Teaching and Learning Manager or Designated Individual.

The Director will determine if the request for Review meets the ground(s) as set out above.

If any ground for review is not found, the Designated Individual will inform the reporting individual in writing of this decision, with the reasons, within ten (10) working days of making the decision. This decision shall be final and shall be reported to the Director and Senior Leadership Team (SMT).

If there is ground(s) for a review, the Director should appoint an independent member of SMT, who has had no previous involvement in the case, to undertake the Review. A report of the outcome of the Review, with any recommendations, shall be sent to the reporting individual, the Director and to the SMT. The SMT shall decide what further action, if any, shall be taken in response to such recommendations. The SMT's decision in this respect shall be final.

8. Support

It is understandable that individuals may be worried about possible repercussions if they were to raise a concern. The law provides protection for whistleblowers who report genuine concerns, to ensure they are not treated unfairly as a result of making a public interest disclosure. EETG encourages openness and will support you if you raise a genuine concern under this Policy, even if it turns out to be mistaken.

9. Raising a concern externally

The aim of this Policy is to provide an internal mechanism to report, investigate and remedy any wrongdoing in the workplace. In most cases, it should not be necessary to alert anyone externally and all reasonable measures should be taken to use internal procedures. However, it remains lawful to raise concerns externally in addition or as an alternative to EETG's own policy. EETG strongly encourages its community to seek advice about whistleblowing, and the extent of the protection available for whistleblowers, before reporting a concern to anyone externally.

The independent whistleblowing charity, Protect (formerly Public Concern at Work), operates a confidential helpline which provides free, independent and confidential advice. The UK helpline number is 020 3117 2520.

10. Vexatious allegations

You should be aware that if your allegations are malicious or motivated by personal gain, action may be taken in line with EETG staff or learner disciplinary procedures.

11. Not sure your concern is covered by the Whistleblowing Policy?

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There are a number of policies and procedures which cover a wide range of issues, these include:

Staff Grievances, the Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, Appeals, Learner Code of Conduct, Learner Discipline and Complaints.

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